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Marxism Today

THEORETICAL AND DISCUSSION JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Contents

Editorial Comments
Nan Green Diversity of the Latin American Revolution
Bert Baker McLuhanism: The Reply of a 'Technological Idiot'
Jean Bruhat One Hundred Years After: The Significance of the Paris Commune
Stanley Hutchins The Communard Exiles in Britain (completion)
Discussion:
John Tarver Socialism, Democracy and the One-Party System
N. C. Brooks Why Did it Happen?

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MARXISM TODAY

THEORETICAL AND DISCUSSION JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Volume 15 Number 6

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CONTENTS

	Editorial Comments	**161**
Nan Green	**Diversity of the Latin American Revolution**	**165**
Bert Baker	**McLuhanism: The Reply of a 'Technological Idiot'**	**170**
Jean Bruhat	**One Hundred Years After: The Significance of the Commune**	**175**
Stanley Hutchins	**The Communard Exiles in Britain (completion)**	**180**
Discussion:		
John Tarver	**Socialism, Democracy and the One-Party System**	**187**
N. C. Brooks	**Why Did it Happen?**	**191**

A FEW OF THE ARTICLES DUE IN JULY AND FORTHCOMING ISSUES

Bill Baker	**The SDF and the Boer War**
Alan Bold	**Modernism in Modern Life**
Mick Costello	**Anarchist Ideas Today**
John Cox	**The Environmental Crisis**
Jeremy Hawthorn	**Marxism and Literary Theory**
Edward Kardelj	**Report to Congress of Yugoslav Self-Managers**
James Klugmann	**Classic British Reformism**
Betty Matthews	**Contemporary British Reformism**
Paul Meier	**Friedrich Engels and William Morris**
John Oakley	**Marcuse and Marxism**
Willy Thompson	**Chomsky**
Julian Tudor Hart	**Health and Class in Britain**
'Voprosi Istorii'	**Discussion on What is a Nation**
Sergio Vuskovic	**Pluralism of Political Parties in Chile**

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Editorial Comments

LOCAL ELECTIONS WERE held in Japan on April 11th along with Gubernatorial elections (the election of Governors) in a number of large cities. In these elections there were some outstanding advances made by the Japanese Communist Party who entered the electoral struggle jointly with the Socialist Party.

In the election for the Governor of Tokio, the progressive candidate, who had the backing of all democratic forces of the country, won an overwhelming victory. He led in every voting area of the city, got 3,615,299 votes (64.7 per cent of all the votes cast in a record turn-out of 72.3 per cent of the voters), and had a majority of 1,600,000 over his opponent. In Osaka, a progressive candidate defeated the Government Liberal-Democratic candidate for the first time.

In the elections for the Prefectoral Assemblies, the Communist Party won 105 seats (before the elections it had held 35). It won seats in 24 Prefectures where it had previously held no seats and there was a general rise in its votes even where seats were not won.

In the City Assemblies of five large cities (Osaka, Nagoya, Kyoto, Yokohama, Kobe) the Communist Party increased its seats from 24 to 52.

In Tokio where elections are held in 23 wards (each equivalent to cities in other Prefectures) the Communist Party increased its seats from 49 to 128, with every one of its candidates elected.

A statement issued on April 12th by the Presidium of the Communist Party examined the results of the elections and the reasons for the advances. One of the main reasons, it said, was the "firm united front" between the Communist Party and the Socialist Party.

The statement contined:

> "The advance of our Party reflects the anger and criticism of the public against long-standing mis-rule of the Liberal-Democratic Party.
>
> "The advance was secured as the result of the active policy of our Party and its achievements, a policy which concretely met the aspirations of the people to defend their lives and living conditions on such issues as public hazards (pollution), prices, social security, over-crowding, over dispersion, and the building of a peaceful country. Out-dated slanders, poured out against our Party by the LDP and its anti-communist supporters, could not conceal the fact that it is precisely the Japanese Communist Party who is an indomitable standard bearer of democracy and peace, that it has *no* connections with big business and finance circles, but defends the lives and living standards of the people."

JAPANESE COMMUNISTS AND DEMOCRACY

In connection with the elections it is interesting to note the interview before the elections, given to foreign correspondents by Kenji Miyamoto, Chairman of the Presidium of the Communist Party of Japan, at Tokio on March 7th.

One of the questions he was asked by an unknown correspondent was the Party's attitude to Parliamentary democracy. Said the correspondent:

> "Mr. Miyamoto, you say that your Party wish at present only to establish a democratic government, not a socialist government . . . is parliamentary democracy (only to be supported) during the establishment of a democratic government or will it be extended if a socialist government is established in Japan? If so, do you think that, even under a socialist government, you will keep a democratic system with a parliament."

The correspondent continued by asking what was the Japanese Communist attitude to socialist countries who did not have a parliamentary democracy.

Miyamoto replied:

> "Our attitude of supporting a system of democratic representation in Japan both under a democratic coalition government or under socialism is firm. Therefore, as a matter of fact we approve a plural political party system. Lenin himself adopted the Russian form of advance—including some restrictions on the suffrage—after the Russian revolution, but, in so doing, he warned that this was a Russian form, not necessarily to be applied to the system of universal representation or of elections in all countries.
>
> "With regard to the question of how we should approach our conception of parliamentary democracy in relation to other Communist Parties, the idea held by the Communist Party of Japan is one necessary for socialism under Japanese conditions—in a country where the people have a democratic consciousness and where importance is attached to voting under a developed parliamentary system. It is entirely a matter to be decided by other Communist Parties what form of democracy *they* chose. On this we will never intervene. We will not try to impose the form taken in Japan on another party, nor do we insist that only our way is correct."

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CAPITALIST FINANCIAL CRISIS

At the time of writing (May 11th), the wider economic and political repercussions of the capitalist currency crisis, brought about by the speculative unloading of hundreds of millions of overvalued US dollars on Western Europe, especially on Western Germany, are only beginning to emerge.

Whether or not this crisis has by now been temporarily overcome by some "patch-work" solution, a number of things are clear. First, those who have been loudly proclaiming that capitalist crises are things of the past, that the capitalists have learned how to avoid them and plan their economy, that Marxists, Communists, who have emphasised the contradictions in, and the instability of, the capitalist system, were sadly "out-of-date", have been proved wrong. The events of the past few weeks have proved once again how brittle, how much on a knife edge, the capitalist economy really is.

Second, those who, noting the advance of the international firms across the frontiers, have taken to talk of "super-imperialism"—of the lessening of contradictions between capitalist states, of a growing, unified political and economic control by a few of these giants, have also been given cause furiously to think. Because if one thing was revealed with brutal sharpness by this crisis, it was the conflicting and opposed interests of the different capitalist powers.

The USA sought to export its inflation to Europe, especially to Western Germany. Western Germany sought to meet this onslaught by a "floating", that is by an inevitably re-valued D Mark. This had its repercussions on the economic relations between all the Common Market countries, especially in relation to the prices of agricultural products. The schism within the Common Market between Western Germany and its "client" states (Benelux countries and Holland) on the one hand, and France and its supporters on the other—is clear for all to see.

All this must have an effect on the outcome of the Tory rush to take Britain into the Common Market. For agreement will mean that each of the two main protagonists in the Common Market are looking for an ally wherewith to bash the other.

Thirdly, a point which has been totally ignored in all comment on this crisis, but which needs emphasising again and again—the currency, and therefore the economy, of no single Socialist country is threatened by this dollar flood, nor can it be. The Wall Street sharks can only transmit their kind gifts to their friends and partners in the "free world".

Finally the crisis reveals with brutal frankness, the way capitalism works and what is its main purpose—profit. A handful of international speculators, looking for a quick way to make a profit by selling over-valued dollars for Deutschmarks, can play havoc with the economies of a number of countries, bring unemployment, cuts in real wages and social services, misery on a mass scale to millions of decent, ordinary, working people.

In short, the crisis emphasises more than ever the need to intensify the struggle to end this brutal, crazy, system and replace it by socialism.

IN BUCHAREST—50 YEARS AGO

As in so many countries of Europe, the years that followed the First World War were, in Romania, a time of stormy struggle and rapid advance of socialist ideas.

The Socialist Party grew most rapidly reaching a membership of around 200,000. Trade unions spread as did socialist youth organisations and every variety of workers' press.

In December 1918 the Socialist Party published a draft programme—*Declaration of Principles*—the most radical programme to date in the history of the Romanian working class. The Programme put forward in clear terms the need for the working class to win political power and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In the course of 1919 more and more voices were raised within the Party that it should be transformed into a Communist Party and affiliate to the Communist International. Meanwhile working class struggle extended and October 1920 saw a widespread general strike.

On November 16th, 1920 a Conference of Communist groups, supported by the left wingers who were winning a majority in the Socialist Party as well as in other working class organisations, deepened understanding of the need for a Communist Party. The demand spread. Finally on May 8th, 1921, the Congress of the Socialist Party of Romania decided on the formation of the Romanian Communist Party.

So last month the Romanian working class and people were celebrating half a century of the most varied and difficult struggles. The Romanian Party was made illegal within

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a few years of its foundation. It knew the most ferocious terror, but continued its work. It won allies, struggled against fascism, military fascist dictatorship, virtual enslavement by Nazi Germany. It led the resistance movement in its various forms, and then, after liberation, becoming a great mass movement, turned all its energy to the building of socialism. Today Romania, once a land of shattering, almost colonial poverty, is a country with a modern, diversified industry, rapidly advancing with (in 1970) an industrial output some 17 times that of 1938.

Those who wish to study the successes and the problems of building socialism in Romania will greatly welcome the publication in English in four volumes[1] of a wide selection of Reports, Speeches and Articles over the period July 1965—June 1970 by Nicolae Ceausescu the General Secretary of the Party and President of the Council of State.

TRADE UNIONS IN SOCIALIST SOCIETY

A very important discussion on the role and organisation of trade unions in socialist society took place at the meeting of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, held at Bucharest on February 10th-11th of this year.

Recommendations were made, in the words of the *Agerpress* Report,[2] "for a continued improvement of trade union activity in the following fields: expanding working-class democracy, ensuring the participation of the working class, as of all employees, in the conduct of enterprises and institutions, and of socialist society as a whole, enhancing the role of the trade unions in solving the social problems of the working people and in the socialist education of the masses." Steps were recommended for democratising the organisational structure of the unions.

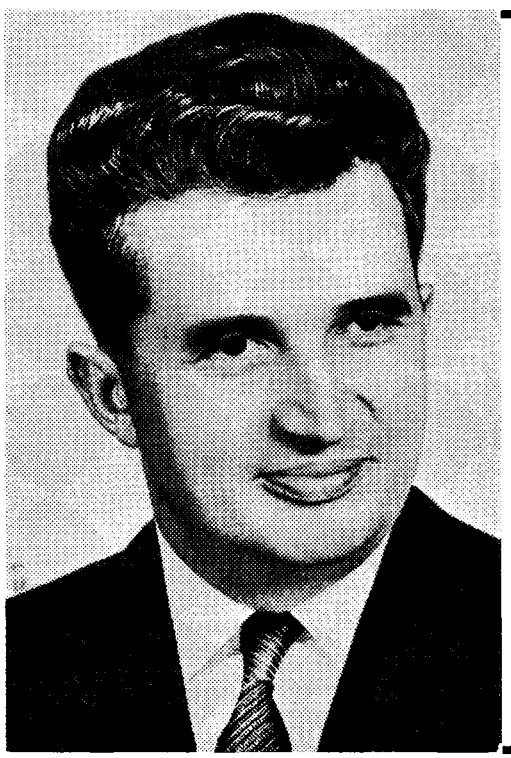
Those interested in the widespread discussion on socialist democracy, that is taking place in most of the socialist countries, should certainly study the speech made by Nicolae Ceausescu, General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, at this Central Committee meeting.

Socialist democracy has been expanded and improved in the recent period, he explained, and this "is a continuous process":

> "What we have achieved so far cannot be considered as the end of the process but, on the contrary, as a stage which has opened the road towards

[1] Published by Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, available at Collets.

[2] *Romanian News Agency (Agerpress)*, No. 8, 1971.



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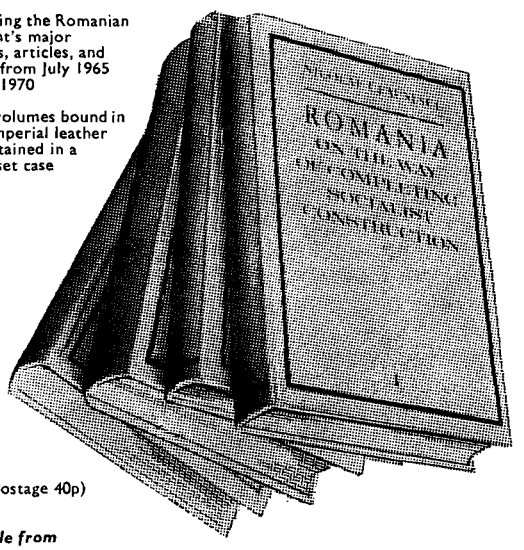

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continuous improvement and expansion of the forms of the participation of the people in the government of society."

On certain aspects of past trade union work Nicolae Ceausescu was extremely critical:

"I think that we must draw attention especially to a certain bureaucratisation of trade union leadership and to the fact that some present organisational forms as well as the composition of the leading bodies of the unions are not adequate, and fail to ensure due weight to the participation in trade union activity of the working people directly active in production."

Continuing with his criticisms, he added:

"I believe that in connection with the activity of the trade unions we have to bear in mind that all of us—including the comrades working directly in this field—have viewed and view the problems of trade union work still under the influence of certain older concepts, dating from many years back . . . The role of the trade unions has changed much in our country, and the old slogan 'conveyor belt', used in early years of socialist construction, no longer corresponds to the present stage of development of society. We have reached a stage of social evolution which calls for changes in some of our concepts of the role of trade unions, or their forms of organisation and activity."

SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY AND THE UNIONS

The development of the productive forces and the perfection of the relations of production, Nicolae Ceausescu continued:

"impose as an objective necessity the continuous expansion of socialist democracy, the creation of the most suitable organisational framework for the fullest possible participation of the working people in directly running economic and social life."

It is necessary, he said, to find ways of extending the role of the unions in general meetings of the employees in discussions in the enterprises of future plans and production. The leadership of the unions must be democratised, and it is especially important to extend the number of workers, engineers and technicians directly working in production on the leading committees. Measures put forward by the union leaderships should follow a general discussion amongst the workers. The role of unions at enterprises should be strengthened and their autonomy extended. "The trade union in the enterprise must really become the basic unit in trade union activity". The leading role of the Party should be correctly understood:

"I think that the style of work of some Party bodies and organisations that have practically taken the place of the activity of the trade union organisations has also contributed to the diminution, and in some cases to loss of prestige and authority of the unions."

Party leadership of unions he added:

"has to be of a political character, to ensure their general direction, not tutelage."

MORE ON THE COMMUNE

We wrote in the *Short Bibliography* in our March issue of the monumental *Grande Histoire de la Commune* which was being published in five volumes by the *Livre Club Diderot*, written by Georges Soria.

Now the fourth volume has appeared under the title *La Guerre Civile*. It includes special contributions in the form of drawings or paintings by Pablo Picasso, Max Ernst, Renato Guttuso, Alexandre Tichler and Vieira da Silva. The four chapters which compose this volume are on: "Versailles begins hostilities"; "The Fate of Paris in the Balance"; "The Bloody Week" and "The Commune in the Provinces".

Once again the story is told, not only in words, but by most magnificent illustrations. There is probably nowhere such living pictures of fighting on the barricades. Cartoons, prints, drawings, take one through the fighting to the days of defeat, to the Mur des Fédérés, the shooting of prisoners, burial of victims, continued fighting even in the catacombs. There is a very rare picture of a Commune armoured train.

As we go to press a Colloquium on "The Century of the Paris Commune", organised by the Maurice Thorez Institute, has just drawn to a close in Paris.

It was an impressive meeting with a broad attendance of members of the French Communist Party, Socialists (including Guy Mollet who addressed the Colloquium), historians, Communist and non-Communist, and representatives of Communist and Workers' Parties from many countries including a delegation of five from the Soviet Union.

The Colloquium was opened by Georges Cogniot speaking on "The Commune and its Place in History".

Amongst the main reporters were the French historian Jean Gacon on "The Commune, State and Democracy"; Jean Bruhat, author of perhaps the most important study of the Commune, on "The Commune and Culture", and Jean Elleinstein on "The Commune and Internationalism". The final address was delivered by Jacques Duclos.

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Diversity of the Latin-American Revolution

Nan Green

> "At the beginning of August 1967, Latin American revolutionaries and communists met in Havana to discuss . . . new concepts of direct confrontation with imperialism. The meeting was called by the Organisation of Latin American Solidarity (OLAS), and out of it came a new International, a Marxist Leninist Revolutionary International, which carefully spelled out the necessity of *armed struggle as the only way* of defeating imperialism and establishing a socialist world".

The italics are mine. The words are those of the American journalist John Gerassi, and are quoted from a 650-page book entitled *Latin American Radicalism* (Cape, 1970). They make an appropriate starting point for an attempt to examine the rapidly changing scene in Latin America.

No Blueprint

There were widely-varying views at the OLAS Conference, as all those present admitted. Much the most vehemently expressed was the view that armed struggle, guerrilla struggle, was "the only way", a view stemming quite understandably from the success of the Cuban revolution, the first and only socialist revolution in that vast continent, which has inspired the whole revolutionary movement with admiration and hope. It was a view that had received further stimulus from the writings of Régis Debray (*Revolución en la Revolución*) who, as will be remembered, stressed at that time the importance of the guerrilla group (*foco*) over and above that of political organisation or theory, trade union action or any other form of struggle for Latin America. His book was widely disseminated and awoke a particular response among the youth, ablaze with impatience for revolutionary change. And yet, as we can see more clearly now, it was already becoming outdated.

Gerassi exaggerated to some extent. The OLAS Conference, after tremendous debate—and it will be recalled that though there was some very acrimonious polemics from the left, there was also some dogmatic resistance from those whose political thinking favoured more "traditional" models of revolutionary change—passed a resolution which referred to guerrilla struggle as "the most adequate form for waging and developing revolutionary war in *most of our countries*" (my italics, N.G.) It declared, further, that "this does not mean that the urban population, and especially the working class, cannot now assume a role of great importance", and concluded:

> "The substance of the Latin American Revolution is determined by its orientation against imperialism and the capitalist-landlord oligarchy . . . the revolution is a struggle for national independence, liberation from the oligarchy, for a socialist path that will assure our peoples economic and social development".

All this happened less than four years ago. The course of events since then has shown that there is no "only way" and equally no other specific model which is applicable to the whole of Latin America. Neither the Cuban nor any other revolution can be a blueprint for the revolutionaries of any other country. Lenin warned of this as far back as 1905, when he wrote: "The principal mistake which revolutionaries can make is to look backwards, towards the revolutions of the past, at a moment when life itself is bringing forward so many new elements, which must be fitted into the chain of events".

Some of the new elements in Latin America could barely have been foreseen in 1967. At least two, possibly three, new forms of struggle are already in progress since then—though none of them is more than beginning and their success still hangs very much in the balance.

Developments in Peru

In October 1968, what most observers took for a routine military coup took place in Peru. President Fernando Belaunde, a fairly typical Latin American political figure, with one year of his Presidency still to run, was overthrown by a military Junta headed by General Juan Velasco Alverado, head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The Junta proclaimed the "necessity of putting an end to economic chaos, immoral administration and the exploitation of national resources for privileged groups". Fine words, but there was little if any precedent for taking them seriously, because they are the kind of routine promise made by Latin American reactionaries when they seize

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power. Moreover, most of the senior officers involved in the coup were graduates of the US-operated School of the Americas in the Panama Canal Zone, and had been involved in the suppression of the insurrection led by the guerrilla leader Hugo Blanco in 1965. So it is no wonder if people did not expect anything very new.

Just before his downfall, President Belaunde had signed a contract with the International Petroleum Company (a subsidiary of Standard Oil New Jersey). Six days after the coup, the new government startled everyone by seizing the IPC oilfields at Brea and Parinas and the refinery at La Falara. In February 1969, the Junta announced that it was suing IPC for 690,524,283 dollars for oil extracted between March 1924 and October 1969. Under the terms of the Hickenlooper Amendment of the 1961 Foreign Aid Act, the US Government can cut off aid and apply sanctions to any government with which a US-owned company is in dispute for longer than six months. Nevertheless, the new Government stuck to its intention, though in March 1969 it agreed to pay 71,000,000 dollars compensation: this, however, was to be set against the claim for 690 million.

It next declared that Peru's territorial waters extended 200 miles from her coastline, and proceeded to seize US tuna-fishing boats and fine their owners. Since then it has nationalised the fishmeal producing sector of the country's fishing industry (Peru is the world's largest producer of fishmeals).

Economic Measures

Up to October 1968, 90 per cent of the cultivated land in Peru was owned by 2 per cent of the population. The new government announced that agrarian reform was on the way. Nelson Rockefeller, who had intended to pay a visit to Peru as President Nixon's personal representative, was informed that his visit would be "inopportune". Although there were threats from the USA to cut the sugar quota or discontinue "aid" and cease to sell arms to Peru, the Junta refused to be turned from its course. The plan for agrarian reform was announced: it was designed to abolish the huge private estates and promote agricultural co-operatives. This is now being done; the co-operatives are at present being led by state officials, but it is announced that they will eventually be run by their members. The expropriated land is to be compensated for by a maximum sum of 2,500 dollars in cash, the balance to be paid in non-transferable bonds maturing in 20, 25 and 30 years. Plans for company law reform and the development of Peruvian industry have followed. The US-owned telephone company has been nationalised.

Private ownership of water for irrigation has been abolished. Plans for a new zinc refinery and two new oil refineries are in hand. A decree has been announced for acquiring urban land and the building of houses to be let at reasonable rents. The new government has stated: "Everything which comes into the fields of energy and communications must become the irreversible property of the state".

Peru has a big external debt (estimated at 800,000,000 dollars) and desperately needs credit. The Junta is therefore anxious not to deter foreign investors, while at the same time, if it is to keep the support of the people, it must implement its pledges of revolutionary change. Diplomatic relations have been established with the Soviet Union and a (still rather small) trade agreement has been signed.

It was not until the beginning of this year that Hugo Blanco and other revolutionary and trade union leaders were released from prison. Meanwhile, the Peruvian Communist Party, in October 1969 at the World Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties, stated:

> "Naturally, our Party takes a clear-cut stand against the anti-popular aspects of the present government, while backing with mass action that aspect which is historically most significant—*the government's determined stand against imperialist aggression*".

Chile on the Socialist Road

A development such as that which has taken place in Peru can barely have been envisaged at the OLAS Conference in 1967. However, some if not all of those present on that occasion (including Fidel Castro) had long conceded that Chile, the most experienced and sophisticated democracy in Latin America, *might* find a way to socialism without guerrilla struggle or armed insurrection. Chile made a major turn in the direction of socialism on September 4th, 1970 when Salvador Allende, a member of the Chilean Socialist Party and candidate of the left wing alliance known as Popular Unity (comprising the Communist and Socialist parties, the Radical Party and two smaller groups, the Movement of Unitarian Popular Action and the Independent Popular Action) won the presidential election.

Dr. Allende's victory was neither sudden nor altogether unexpected. It was the outcome of a long, slow process of building left unity which began over sixteen years ago when the Communist Party of Chile emerged from illegality. Allende, heading the united front of Socialist and Communist Parties then known as FRAP, had stood in the presidential elections of 1958 and again in 1964, when he came near to winning, but for the fact that the Christian Democrats, whose pro-

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gramme of radical reform was very similar to that of the FRAP, had the backing of the United States.

Articles examining Chile's turn towards socialism are to appear in subsequent issues of *Marxism Today*. There is no need, therefore, to go into great detail on the Popular Unity programme: genuine land reform, nationalisation of the big copper mines, nitrates, iron ore, coal, electricity, gas, shipping and communications; nationalisation (with the alternative of being bought out) of private banks and insurance companies; a democratic state education system, new wages policy, extension and improvement of social security, efficient planning of housing; the abolition of commercial influence on radio, television, press and cinema.

It is perhaps worth while noting some of the similarities—they should not be taken as identical patterns—between the programme of Popular Unity and that envisaged in the *British Road to Socialism*. First and foremost, it must be stressed that the victory in Chile was not one of the ballot box alone, but a combination of electoral activity with long, sustained and often bitter *mass struggle* and action, painstaking discussion, explanation and education (including the work of hundreds of socialist and communist students who spent weekends and entire vacations teaching peasants to read and write—and thus eventually to qualify as voters) and the building of unity with all anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist forces in the country. Salvador Allende, in an interview with the Christian Democrats shortly after his election, declared: "I believe that the basic and definite guarantee in Chile has been, and is the people, the workers, students and young people, those who earn their own bread, men, women and young people *who have struggled for generations and will continue to struggle* to maintain and consolidate our democratic liberties". (My italics, NG)

Political Pluralism

Secondly, the type of regime that Popular Unity is pledged to build is one of political pluralism. Said Dr. Allende in the same interview: "Political and ideological pluralism is in full keeping with the very nature of Popular Unity and our aim that it be extended to all aspects of our national life".

Does this mean that all political parties, including those which represent those classes which have ceased to be in the position of power, will be allowed to continue as before? In an article in the theoretical journal *Principios*[1] (Jan-Feb 1971) Sergio Vuskovic took a close look at the prospects for political pluralism. He writes:

> "Each Party of the People's Government has its future fully assured. That is, if four parties and two movements yesterday gave birth to Popular Unity and today form the six parties of the People's Government, tomorrow they will be the six parties of the Socialist Government of Chile. . . . That is, the Socialist Government of Chile will continue to be a political coalition, in which no individual party will have the exclusive responsibility. . . . The People's Government will assure political liberty to the classes displaced from power, within the framework of respect for the present law and also of the new People's Law which will be established. . . . Not all the opposition to the People's Government is legal; even before it began it found itself, and now finds itself and will find itself with *illegal oppositions* formed by the ultra-right and North American imperialism. These are the mailed fist of the reaction which will stop at nothing—as was shown by the cold-blooded murder of General Rene Schneider, Commander in Chief of the Chilean Army. The patriotic duty of the people towards such groups is to smash them".

He went on to say that the political opposition is not homogeneous, and that it will undergo further splits, some elements turning towards the left and some further to the right, as the democratic system develops.

Chile's road will be difficult and thorny. It must not be forgotten that Dr. Allende came to office on a *minority vote*, that the capitalist and land-owning classes will not give up without a fierce struggle, and that the United States cannot be expected to stand by and watch another Latin American country escape from its grasp.

Both Dr. Allende and Luis Corvalan, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Chile recognise that Chile's experience is unique in Latin America. Luis Corvalan, following the victory of Popular Unity warned against:

> ". . . rushing to conclude that now, following the victory scored by the people of Chile, the path of elections has shaped into some sort of model which could be mechanically copied by all Latin American countries; we should conclude that the *unity* and mobilisation of the people, the anti-imperialist and anti-democratic forces and primarily the unity of the proletariat, the unity of the working people, is the most valuable aspect of Chile's experience".

Events in Bolivia

Not a month after the Chilean election, in October 1970, *The Times* carried an article from La Paz, capital of Bolivia, headlined: "Bolivia Follow's Peru's Lead".

"Bolivia", wrote the correspondent, "was put into the camp of Latin American 'revolutionary nationalism' alongside Peru and Chile by General

[1] A translation of this article will shortly appear in *Marxism Today*.

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Juan Jose Torrez when he gave the new regime's first international press conference here last night".

General Torrez had acted in opposition to a previous military coup—that of General Ovando on September 26th, 1969. Like other Latin American military leaders Ovando had proclaimed a so-called "revolutionary" government which was going to carry out fundamental reforms of a national revolutionary character. This had been welcomed by the Bolivian people; they wanted the nationalisation of the US-owned Bolivian Gulf Oil, the creation of a state monopoly on the export of minerals, that exporting companies should deposit their earnings in the Bolivian Central Bank, the establishment of trade and diplomatic relations with socialist countries, the end of the military occupation of the tin mines and the mining settlements, trade union rights and a campaign against illiteracy—all of which were promised by the Ovando regime and some of which were actually embarked on.

A powerful popular movement in support of these measures continued to grow. However, during the summer of last year, 1970, it became clear that Ovando was beginning to waver, and was gradually capitulating to the reactionary Generals Miranda and Ayoroa. It became clear that preparations were being made for a reactionary coup. Trade Union and student leaders were arrested; the universities and high schools were closed indefinitely; police fired at demonstrators in the streets and several people were killed. The Ovando government announced, in violation of the promises it had made in October 1969, that it was going to pay compensation to Bolivian Gulf Oil, to the tune of over 78,000,000 dollars.

The most radical of the government Ministers were dismissed from their posts; right wing terrorists began to get away with murder, and other crimes with impunity. Finally, General Miranda staged his threatened coup. Ovando returned to La Paz and negotiated with him, agreeing to share power. Three other army chiefs pushed both of them aside; and finally General Torrez, speaking to the workers, peasants and students, forced the three to capitulate. All this happened within a matter of days.

Push the Process Forward

This again looked like a typical Latin American "palace revolution". Nevertheless, the Bolivian Labour Confederation, though it had been denied participation in the new government, decided to back it on the grounds that the defeated reactionary officers constituted by far the greater danger. At a press conference on October 19th, 1970, General Torrez stated:

> "The state will control the main industries, in particular the iron and steel industry, gas extraction and the petrochemical industry. We shall boost agricultural production, imparting a new trend to our agrarian reform and strengthening the economic basis in the countryside. We shall also encourage the growth of co-operatives. . . . We want to get rid of the economic dependence on imperialism . . . we shall expand our relations with the socialist world".

Some at least of these promises have begun to be put into effect. The wages of the tin miners, the most militant section of the Bolivian working class, have been put back to their 1956 level and the military occupation of the mines has been withdrawn. The land reform is being pushed ahead. New industrial undertakings in zinc, bismuth and antimony are to be started this year. In November last, the USSR agreed to lend Bolivia 27,500,000 dollars and other loans have been arranged with Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Paul Estrade of *France Nouvelle* is quoted in *Comment* of December 5th last as saying:

> "The trade unions, with the militant Miners' Federation at their head, the student organisations and the left parties, are not prepared to drag along behind the new ruling group headed by Torrez any more than they were prepared to do so with the Ovando government. Resolute support, certainly, but always politically independent of the ruling group nonetheless. It is in these popular forces, stifled for too long, that the future resides . . . there can be no doubt that taken along with the events in Peru and Chile the developments in Bolivia mark an important step forward for the anti-imperialist forces at the expense of the local oligarchy and the North American trusts".

This too is the attitude of the Communist Party of Bolivia, which declared in a statement published on November 1st, 1970:

> "Our task is to push the process forward . . . the unity of the people is necessary to advance and make the government advance in the direction of the anti-imperialist proposals, the proposals for sovereignty. . . . This cannot be an abstract process. Imperialism is very concrete in Bolivia (the statement goes on to mention United States aid, U.S.I.S., the US Military Mission, the Peace Corps and such business concerns as Grace, South American Placers, Syracuse, etc) . . . the task of every revolutionary and patriot is to build and mobilise this unity, to advance and safeguard the process imposed by the masses last October".

No "Only Way"

These new, and largely unexpected events in Latin America have undoubtedly shaken some of the widely-held belief in guerrilla struggle as the

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"only way". In the three and a half years since the OLAS Conference, there has been a tendency for the guerrilla struggle to move from the countryside to the towns and cities—for instance, in Guatemala, Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, Brazil and Uruguay. Some of the methods used by "urban guerrilla" groups—the kidnapping of foreign diplomats, bank raids and so forth—are not methods advocated by Communists, and would be "counter-productive" if operated by them. Yet it would be wrong to deny that the activities of the Tupamaros in Uruguay or the urban guerrilla bands in Brazil have served to arouse the attention of the whole world to the bestial crimes of the reactionary military regimes which are still the rule rather than the exception in Latin America, and have contributed in this sense to the many-sided struggle in the various countries.

It would be equally wrong, it seems to me, to think that the role of the Armed Forces can everywhere be expected to follow that in Peru and Bolivia, even though there is evidence that the character of the officer caste is changing to some extent. A spokesman for the reactionary Generals who carried out the 1962 Army coup in Peru said that they had resorted to violence because if they had not done so their junior officers would have acted: he explained that the *Colonels* were "Nasserists" and the *Majors* were "Fidelistas". This was said nine years ago, and possibly some of the then Majors are now Colonels? It is certainly true too, that in this day and age there is less room in the top ranks of the Armies for the type of aristocratic playboy, son of the big landowner, who formerly wore military uniform.

Today's officer has to have a high level of technical education and scientific knowledge; he may very likely come from a different sector of the population —the upper middle class, whose parents, possibly at some sacrifice, have helped him to obtain such education. It is true, moreover, that much of the high-level technical training of this new officer class is given by the United States Army with a view to "prevent the spread of Communism in this hemisphere" and to this end the officer receives ideological training which may enlighten him as to the aspirations of his fellow countrymen and in some instances bring him towards a revolutionary standpoint. But it would be wrong to shut our eyes to the fact that there are military regimes of the most brutally reactionary character in some Latin American countries against which a just war must be waged by the whole people.

Neither guerrilla struggle alone, rural or urban, nor "progressive" military coups, nor working class action alone, nor armed insurrection alone, is the answer for the rest of Latin America. A combination of forces, *all* the forces which are against imperialist domination and the capitalist-landlord oligarchy, will enable each country, in its different circumstances and historical stages, to work out its revolutionary strategy. And the building of unity towards this end is proceeding—at various speeds—in each country.

Changes in the Church

Not very long ago, it was possible to regard the Catholic Church in Latin America (with a few honourable exceptions) as wholly on the side of the *status quo*. Before the Pope's visit in August of last year, over 800 priests from Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Bolivia jointly called on their bishops for a new approach to the problem of violence, to "distinguish between the violence exercised in Latin America for centuries by a minority, and the violence which comes from the oppressed majority". They proposed that the Church should teach the concept of "the legitimate right of legitimate defence by the people . . ." and demanded that the Church should "exhort all Christians to realise a juster society".

A moving letter, addressed by seven Dominican priests in Brazil to Roman Catholic theologians in Latin America and elsewhere, spoke even more strongly:

> "The task of the Christian is to make the spirit of the Gospel penetrate the structures of the world, to create conditions in which men can develop as complete human beings and live in justice, freedom and love. . . . He cannot be faithful to the Prince of Peace by ignoring the institutionalisation of violence around him. He cannot witness to the freedom of the children of God by forgetting the oppression under which so many of his brothers live . . . the people have a right to wage a just war on oppression, a right fully recognised by theology. . . . So, driven by our love for our brothers, by our evangelical understanding of truth, justice and freedom, conscious of our mission as a Church and as Christians . . . we are responding to the need to work with the people for their liberation, running the risks that this entails in the climate of terrorism created by our violent military dictatorship".

United States Dilemma

Thus a significant part of the clergy and a not negligible part of the armed forces are moving—more rapidly in some countries and less so in others—into the battle against imperialism and repression alongside the workers, students and peasants. The revolutionary upsurge gathers speed. What will be the reaction of US imperialism? We can be sure that it will exert every possible effort to keep its grasp on the source of super-profits which Latin America constitutes and has has constituted for decades. Yet *the Marines have not been sent to Chile*, as they were to the Dominican

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Republic just a few years back. They have not even been sent to tiny Ecuador, which recently defied the suspending of military credit sales by the US after Ecuador has claimed 200-mile offshore sovereignty (along with Peru and Chile) and had seized American tuna-fishing boats which violated this limit. "The dispute was settled with a compromise" wrote *The Times* on February 2nd, 1971, ". . . the issue has ranged the Latin American nations almost completely behind Ecuador".

"WASHINGTON WILL AVOID TOUGH LINE ON CHILE" wrote the same paper on November 26th last year. It stated that President Nixon had "reacted with dismay" to Dr. Allende's victory but had been "persuaded to adopt a policy of patience and diplomatic correctness". "An important consideration in adopting the present policy", it went on, "was said to be a realisation that the leverage America is capable of applying to Chile is extremely limited. . . . Economically, Chile is virtually independent of American aid. Ninety per cent of Chilean copper production is sold to West Europe and Japan, and a possible closing of the American market would not seriously affect the economy".

"Patience and diplomatic correctness" are perhaps temporary virtues of necessity. The aim of the United States is to continue to draw superprofits from its superexploitation of the Latin American countries. As in Europe—but to a far greater extent—major sections of US industry are being shifted to those countries; there has been a huge increase in the number of assembly plants set up by the US monopolies; in 1966, the US imported from these assembly plants 113 million dollars worth of finished goods which had US-made parts. In 1969, the figure had reached 1,600 million dollars (an increase of more than ten times). These goods—cars, aeroplanes, electronic equipment, were produced by workers at wages *far lower* than those paid in North American industry.

United States monopoly capital will fight to keep these immense profits. But it is also becoming evident to the working class of the United States that this policy is destroying *its* living standards, and sooner or later the workers in both halves of the hemisphere will come together in an alliance that will destroy the exploitation which they suffer in common.

The "Big Stick" has begun to shrivel. Perhaps *The Times* was not altogether wrong when it wrote, on October 13th, 1970: "The region"—Latin America—" was at one stage regarded as a natural sphere of American influence, but President Nixon has backed away from this responsibility *in the light of US needs in the post-Vietnam era. . . .*"

McLuhanism: The Reply of a "Technological Idiot"

Bert Baker

The possibility of television ever becoming an independent and distinctive art form remains open to argument, but most critics can agree that it is an immensely powerful information medium.

Discussing the potentiality of television in *Marxism Today* several years ago ("What is Television?", January 1964) I wrote: ". . . picture, text, music—and viewer—comprise an inseparable unity. Recognition of this unity and the factors of which it is compounded is essential to any development of a distinct and televisual art form".

Art form or information medium, the assumption is of an indivisible, albeit fluctuating, relationship between form and content.

Content does not Matter

But, since that article, there has arrived on the scene the former Canadian professor of English Marshall McLuhan to assert, amidst a welter of profitable publicity, that form is all. The medium is the message. Content is not merely secondary, it is of absolutely no significance.

> "Our conventional response to all media, namely that it is how they are used that counts, is the numb stance of the technological idiot. For the "content" of a medium is like the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind . . . the effect of the movie form is not related to its programme content" (*Understanding Media*).

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Asked if he regarded only the medium as significant when, for instance, the content of, say, *Peyton Place* is vastly different from that of a documentary or news bulletin, McLuhan replied:

> "It's like changing the temperature in a room. It doesn't matter what's in the room at all, or what pictures are on the wall, or who is in the room. If the temperature drops 40 degrees suddenly, the effect on our outlook, our attitude is profound. Media are like that" (*McLuhan Hot and Cool*).

Says McLuhan:

> "Media of all kinds exert no effect on ordinary perception. They merely serve human ends (like chairs!) and convey data, etc. But macroscopically, the content fades and the medium itself looms large, as does the earth to the astronaut . . ." (*Counterblast*).

Reading McLuhanism, its heavy-handed puns, its convoluted language, there is a temptation to speculate on it all being a giant confidence trick. Knowing the enthusiasm with which it has been welcomed by the practitioners of the mass media, one's suspicions are aroused even more.

If it is a big trick, however, it is one which is being taken seriously by a great many people and one which is used to justify a number of reactionary ideas.

Discussing McLuhan in a recent book ("McLuhan", Fontana Modern Masters), Jonathan Miller describes him as having travelled from the position of conventional literary critic to a "system analyst who prefers to neglect the significance of *what* is said in favour of a study of the mechanical structures through which it is transmitted". Among advantages which McLuhanism offers, says Miller, is "exoneration from the crime of self-indulgence":

> "Intelligent spectators who would once have felt furtive about looking at TV can now sit glued to their sets, confident in the belief that by doing so they are participating in a new community of self-interest. In other words, McLuhan has convened an open university of the air at which to attend is to graduate. . . ."

It is understandable, then, that McLuhan is so favoured by the television tycoons and bright-eyed executives.

Technology above Society

Are people concerned about violence, triviality, partiality, the dominance of the huckster? McLuhanism, blandly ignoring the millions poured annually into television advertising, says they need worry no longer because television's *message* doesn't matter.

Thus, the exhaustive analysis by the Association of Cinematograph and Allied Technicians, documenting TV bias in the treatment of industrial news, becomes irrelevant. Who controls a programme company like London Weekend Television is, as far as programme quality is concerned, unimportant. The contradiction within the medium between genuine creative talent and those whose primary concern is profit ceases to be of significance.

Nor does it matter to McLuhan which class controls the mass media.

Says McLuhan, we and society are being shaped by the electronic media whether we like it or not, and "harnessing the Missouri, Mississippi, Tennessee is kid stuff compared to curbing the movie, Press or television" (*Counterblast*).

While McLuhan sees technology as extensions, as tools of men, he asserts that this technology creates new environments which cannot be controlled by men, that this technology is, in fact, *above* society. So all we can do as we're raped by the new electronic technology is to lay back and enjoy it!

Marxists, of course, reject fatalism. We say that historical laws alone do not make history; they determine the course of history only through the actions, the struggle and consciously directed efforts of millions of people.

Media and Environments

No, says McLuhan, media not people make history. New media create new environments which subliminally change human perception which, in turn, creates historical explosions—and we human beings are helplessly in the grip of these new environments. One such environmental explosion was produced, says McLuhan, by the medium of the phonetic alphabet.

> "The alphabet was one thing when applied to clay or stone, and quite another when set down on light papyrus. The resulting leap in speed and space created the Roman Empire" (*Understanding Media*).

Later came Gutenberg, who printed a Latin bible from moveable type in Mainz in 1437 and a revolution was "achieved almost entirely by the speed-up of information by means of uniform moveable type" (*Understanding Media*). This moveable type "made possible a product that was as uniform and repeatable as a scientific experiment" (*The Gutenberg Galaxy*).

This, claims McLuhan, not the Industrial Revolution, brought men together in factories.

> "With exactly uniform materials that could be distributed from the central course, you could move by roads—and roads were soon built to carry this uniform material—you could move anywhere, you could organise whole communities at a distance" (*McLuhan Hot and Cold*).

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Marx, in *Capital*, declares that "the revolution in the modes of production in industry and agriculture made necessary a revolution in the general conditions of the social process of production, i.e. in the means of communication and transport".

Advances in communications were seen by Marx as a consequence of the changing nature of the means of production. McLuhan claims they were the consequence of changes in media.

But McLuhan also maintains that Marx "never understood causality. He paid no attention to the railway or the steamboat" (*Counterblast*). Yet Marx says in *Capital*: ". . . the means of communication and transport became gradually adapted to the modes of production of mechanical industry, by the creation of river steamers, railways, ocean steamers and telegraphs".

Electronics Era

The printed word, claims McLuhan, requires a "lineal structuring of rational life". Thus, while once we behaved as if our culture was "oral" or "manuscript", soon we began to look and think typographically—that is, visual, linear, successive, instead of oral and simultaneous.

But today, says McLuhan, we have returned to the oral and simultaneous; the Gutenberg era has been replaced by the electronics era—television, radio, computers and automation.

> "Today the globe has shrunk in the wash with the speeded-up information movement from all directions. We have come, as it were, to live in a global village. Our information comes at high speed, electronic speed from all quarters. We would seem to be living, almost under ear conditions, of a small village world" (*McLuhan Hot and Cool*).

McLuhan's stress is on an intrinsic value in line, colour, word, effect, technique and he almost completely devalues them as a means of expression of ideas, reflections of social movement.

> "Patterns of human association based on slower media have become overnight not only irrelevant and obsolete, but a threat to continued existence and sanity. . . .
>
> "This revolution involves us in the study of modes and media as forms that shape and reshape our perceptions. That is what I have meant all along by saying the "medium is the message", for the medium determines the modes of perception and the matrix of assumptions within which objectives are set" (*McLuhan Hot and Cool*).

It is the cathode tube, not the pictures produced on it, which is thus changing not only our senses and mental equipment, but our total environment. At no time, says McLuhan, "has any culture been aware of the effect of its media on its overall association, not even retrospectively" (*McLuhan Hot and Cool*).

Additionally confusing, and demanding challenge, are McLuhan's definitions.

For example, he classifies contemporary media into "hot" or "cool". The "hot"—radio, cinema, photography—are characterised by "high definition", or the state of "being well filled with data". Television is "cool" because the definition is less sharp. From lack of definition McLuhan goes on to assert participation in the "cool" media, because, in the case of television, the viewer is forced to mentally etch in detail. Thus, comics and cartoon are also "cool".

With television McLuhan goes even further and characterises it as an "audio-tactile" medium.

> The image on the screen is "not photo in any sense, but a ceaselessly forming contour of things limned in by the scanning finger. The resulting plastic contour appears by light *through*, not light *on*, and the image so formed has the quality of sculpture and icon, rather than of picture". (*Understanding Media*).

Such definitions do not stand close examination. With television, no matter how the image is created technically, we are conscious only of the image and not the scanning finger. Neither can you *touch* television in the way that you touch sculpture or fabric, any more than you can *feel* the image projected through positive film on to a screen. The technique is subordinate throughout; it remains image.

So powerful is the new technology that "extends our senses and nerves in a global embrace" that McLuhan envisages it ultimately dispensing with language.

> "Electricity points the way to an extension of the process of consciousness itself, on a world scale, and without any verbalisation whatever" (*Understanding Media*).

But McLuhan doesn't make it clear whether his "cosmic consciousness", this "condition of speechlessness" means the replacement of verbalisation by more advanced methods of communication.

Forms of Communication

Communication takes different forms of expression in different levels of society; sophisticated and varied in advanced societies, not limited to one form; limited and simple in undeveloped societies.

> "Early picture-writing arose at an early stage from the hunting mode of life—drawn initially for the purely utilitarian purpose of communicating some information to absent comrades . . ." (*Art and Social Life*, Plekhanov).

In prophesying the disappearance of verbalisation, however, McLuhan suggests that the *quality* of language has no permanence. But if we look at

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words as a medium, and separate them totally from meaning in a conventional sense, they can still possess a quality of their own, as with poetry.

Does this mean that we go along with McLuhan, then, and agree that technique is primary and the message unimportant? No, poetry can be meaningless sound, yet the words themselves have a musical, emotional quality to them.

> Poetry can be "sound full of emotional reference —in other words, *music*; and music, like logistic, is translatable and universal. Thus we see that the mingling of reference and emotion, which is characteristic of poetry, is not an adulteration, but expresses a dialectic relation between the opposite poles of instinct and environment, a relation which is rooted in real concrete social life. . . . Poetry is clotted social history, the emotional sweat of man's struggle with Nature" (*Illusion and Reality*, Christopher Caudwell).

Ah, yes, says McLuhan, but new media absorb preceding media, and "the only real content is the technology peculiar to each medium and its effects".

So, claims McLuhan, the newspapers "killed the theatre, just as TV hit the movies and night clubs very hard". The content of a film, he asserts, is "a novel or a play or an opera"; the cinema "took over the novel and the newspaper and the stage all in one".

An unsupportable claim. Many films are made which are not based on novels or stage plays. Books have not disappeared as a consequence of films or television. Newspapers continue to be published (in Britain, in fact, more newspapers are sold today than before the existence of television).

"Masters of Technology"

McLuhan's basic theme of the pre-eminence and basic influence on our environment of media has thrown up some weird social comment on his part.

> "We are", says McLuhan, "certainly coming within conceivable range of a world automatically controlled . . . whole cultures could now be programmed to keep their emotional climate stable, in the same way that we have begun to know something about maintaining equilibrium in the commercial economies of the world" (*Understanding Media.*

McLuhan doesn't say, incidentally, who would do the "programming", and one way in which the US economy has maintained "equilibrium", of course, has been with the pursuit of war in Vietnam, although even this "stabilising factor" is now ceasing to work.

As if America's racial conflict is now past history, McLuhan suggests that "the real integrator or leveller of white and Negro in the South was the private car and the truck, not the expression of moral points of view". (*Understanding Media*).

And: "Today, in the electronic age, the richest man is reduced to having much the same entertainment and even the same food and vehicles as the ordinary man". (*Understanding Media*)

> "Europeans cannot master these new powers of technology because they take themselves too seriously and too sentimentally. . . .
>
> "The English have lived longer with technological culture than anybody else, but they have lost their chance to shape it when the ship yielded to the plane. . . .
>
> "The Russians are impotent to shape technological culture because of their inwardness and grimness. The future masters of technology will have to be lighthearted and intelligent. The machine easily masters the grim and the dumb". (*Counter-blast*).

No prizes for guessing the identity of McLuhan's "future masters of technology!

Profit and Monopoly

No more discussed by McLuhan (although implicitly criticised in his first book *The Mechanical Bride*, 1951) are the implications of who owns and controls the media, and what functional changes have taken place in the media over the past century. Whereas media were once used to spread information and knowledge, new methods of financing the media have emerged and with them what Raymond Williams has described as a new principle: "Anything can be said, providing it can be said profitably". The advances in media technology have been paralleled with contraction in ownership and control.

In the United States oil money makes holiday movies, refrigerator companies own television stations, and in Britain television companies are, in the main, part of giant multi-media concerns with interests in widely varying sectors of industry. Granada Television is part of a group which makes programmes, hires out sets, owns several book publishing companies, garages and grocery stores. ATV has countless interests in music and theatre firms, bowling alleys, records and property; the International Press Corporation publishing giant also has interests in ATV. Westward TV is involved with the Keith Prowse, Alfred Hays and Ashton J. Mitchell theatre, travel and ticket agencies. Associated British Pictures Corporation, which is linked to the US Warner Bros., has interests in Thames Television.

Shareholders in London Weekend Television include Bowaters, Imperial Tobacco Pension Trust, Lombard Banking, Pearl Assurance, the Observer, the Daily Telegraph and the News of the World. Most national daily newspapers, as well as a

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number of provincial newspaper groups, have interests in commercial television, which, in the past, has made very big profits.

In 12 years Rediffusion (now incorporated in Thames Television) made total profits of £52 million from a starting capital of £500,000; ATV made £45 million from starting capital of £1,750,000, and is now worth, on paper £29 million.

The trend toward monopoly within the commercial sector of the television medium has been apparent for some considerable time. In its October 1970 report on ITV, the Prices and Incomes Board suggested the possibility of mergers, proposing that ". . . there should now be a shift of balance from, on the one hand, greater diversity and therefore higher cost to, on the other hand, less diversity and lower cost". The prerogative of monopoly, in fact, in any industry. And the *Financial Times* on January 11th, 1971 referring to "rationalisation", declared: "It is perhaps the ten smaller contractors that have suffered most from the squeeze on programmes, which are mainly made by the big five network companies".

Advertising

Altogether, Big Business spent £550 million on advertising in 1970, with £125 million going to television advertising. As many as 22,000 new advertisements are introduced into commercial television every year, all trying to be more novel, more memorable, *more efficient at selling* than those which have gone before. McLuhan is asking us to believe these millions, the creative effort, the motivational research are pointless—that none of it has any effect.

It is now accepted that this profit motive affects television programme quality. As the Prices and Incomes Board report pointed out: "The financial structure of independent television . . . tends to discourage the showing of a balanced mixture of programmes". Certainly the troubles at London Weekend Television arose not so much from the quality of the programmes it initially aimed to transmit, but from the fact that other networking companies did not consider such programmes profitable.

Even the BBC, the public sector of broadcasting, is indirectly influenced by advertising. Commercial television advertising revenue is affected by programme ratings, and the BBC competes with commercial television. Says Humphrey Burton, formerly with the BBC and now a freelance television producer: "For the BBC ratings have assumed mystic proportions, as if they meant gold".

The BBC now spends £100 million annually, and with a labour force of nearly 25,000 is not merely an arm of the Establishment but is also Big Business.

Commercial media influences outside Britain make themselves felt—by the sale of series, co-productions, the work of American-owned advertising agencies in Britain—not only in commercial television but in the BBC as well. For example, the BBC has already engaged in a number of co-productions with television companies in West Germany, Sweden and the US; it is now involved in important joint ventures with the US publishers, Time-Life Incorporated.

Everything for Sale

We should bear in mind also that US advertising techniques aren't limited to the sale of products. *The Selling of the President* by Joe McGinnis, describes how Nixon was "sold" as if he were a deodorant by a group of advertising and television men with a budget of £4 million.

Wrote McGinnis: "It is not surprising that politicians and advertising men should have discovered one another. And, once they recognised that the citizen did not so much vote for a candidate as make a psychological purchase of him, not surprising that they began to work together".

In the McGinnis book, McLuhan himself is quoted:

> "In all countries the party system has folded like the organisation chart. Policies and issues are useless for election purposes, since they are specialised and too hot. The shaping of the candidate's integral image has taken the place of discussing conflicting points of view".

In Britain also the Tories have used the services of professional advertising agencies, both during and between elections, and the Labour Party has a voluntary publicity group made up of advertising and public relations experts.

Political campaigning on television is of particular importance when you consider that, for instance, the *Times* in January 1970 was reporting that a sample of 1,400 electors in 60 constituencies revealed 85 per cent regarding television as a "very" or "fairly" important source of political news.

These hard facts in relation to the most potent of the contemporary mass media are the reality.

How can content not matter when, for example, by means of television we watch man's first step on to the surface of the moon? Isn't content significant when television is used increasingly in education, for all age levels? Isn't it a comment, both on the content and the influence of television, that when a literary classic is televised, youngsters flock to bookshops and libraries to read the original?

Above all, to accept that "the medium is the message", is contemptuously to dismiss the con-

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sistent and determined effort of the medium's creative talent to raise the quality of content, to make programmes, throughout the broad spectrum of television, which will be of the best—in social significance, in entertainment, in accurate information and in cultural value.

To accept the thesis of McLuhan is to align oneself on the side of those who are in television primarily to make money against the best forces within the industry, who, with encouragement and help, could very well transform television into the art form which the most optimistic among us believe it can become.

NOTE

McLuhan books quoted: *The Mechanical Bride* (1951); *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962); *Understanding Media* (1964); *Counterblast* (1970).

Centenary of the Paris Commune

One Hundred Years After— The Significance of the Paris Commune

Jean Bruhat

(*The author lectures in history in the Faculty of Vincennes. He has written many books and articles on the French and international working class movement. In collaboration with Jean Dautry and Emile Tersen he wrote "La Commune de 1871", an extended and illustrated edition of which was recently published by Editions Sociales, Paris.*)

Addressing the children of a new school during the Commune, Jean Allemane, a printing worker and active militant of the fifth *arrondissement* declared: "Whatever may happen, when you have grown up, you must defend the memory of the men of the Commune against those who slander them".

What then is the significance of the Commune a century later?

Two preliminary points need to be made. In the first place it must never be forgotten that the Commune only lasted for seventy-two days. It is said that Lenin danced with joy when the young Soviet Republic passed its seventy-second day. It should also be added that the Communards were very quickly forced to devote themselves above all, to the defence of their besieged city.

In the second place, "the great social measure of the Commune was its own working existence". This formula of Marx's needs to be considered. The Commune gave rise to a new kind of state. This does not mean that those involved had a clear picture in their minds of what they were about from the very beginning. There was a power vacuum in Paris by the evening of March 18th. Thiers had departed, accompanied by a large number of officials and senior Civil Servants. It was necessary and correct for the Central Committee of the National Guard to constitute itself as a *de facto* Government.

Pre-Commune Organisations

The role of spontaneity during the Commune has been exaggerated. Certainly there were spontaneous movements. It must be remembered that organisations existed that were open to the people of Paris. Certain like the *Chambre Fédérale des Sociétés Ouvrières* (Federal Chamber of Workers Organisations) established in November 1869, and the *Federation of the Paris Sections of the*

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International Working Men's Association, founded on April 18th 1870, dated back to the end of the Empire. Other organisations arose from the conditions of the war. On the very day after September 4th[1] *Vigilance Committees* were established in all the *arrondissements* of Paris. And this is how they defined their tasks:

> "To take the urgent measures necessary for the defence of Paris and for the equitable distribution of food supplies in their *arrondissements*, either on their own responsibility or in line with the instructions of the competent authorities; to prepare for the establishment of the Commune of Paris by elections to the Municipal Council and finally resolutely to consolidate the defence of the Democratic and Social Republic".

On the evening of September 5th the delegates representing the Committees in the *arrondissements* established the *Central Republican Committee of the Twenty Arrondissements*. Its role was decisive. In addition, meetings of representatives of different battalions of the National Guard took place from the early days of February. A Provisional Central Committee was established which on March 10th proclaimed itself to be: "*the inexorable barrier against all attempts to overthrow the Republic*". Five days later the official Central Committee was established. It should also be added that towards the end of the Second Empire, there was in France a certain aspiration towards the establishment of a Revolutionary Workers Party. The best and most advanced revolutionary workers felt the need for an organisation of their own, faced as they were with the Proudhonist tradition which abjured politics, and a republican party dominated by petty-bourgeois democrats and bourgeois liberals. The absence of such a party (fully comprehensible for historical reasons) explains many of the mistakes and the confusions.

Composition of the General Council

If the composition of the General Council of the Commune is examined, it can be seen to have been made up of men of very different trends. The elections resulted in the return of a very large number of workers. It should be remembered that in 1848, *one single working man*, the engineering worker Albert, took part in the Provisional Government, established after the February days. Of the 65 effective members of the Council of the Commune, 25 (almost 40 per cent) were workers—moulders like Camélinat and Thiesz, engineers like Langevin and Assi (who was the leader of the strikes at Creusot which took place the previous year), jewellery workers like Frankel, book-binders like the splendid Varlin etc. The other members of the Council were, in general, from the petty bourgeoisie. They were clerks, book-keepers, doctors, teachers, lawyers, journalists.

With regard to the employees it is important to remember that this section of the working people had taken part in economic struggles at the end of the Empire, at least, the employees of the big stores like "Le Louvre" and "La Ville de Paris". They initiated one of the first strikes in May 1869 to secure the application of the law of 1814 concerning Sunday rest, and this was successful. In October (of the same year) the Employee's Trade Union began a new struggle in order to secure the 12-hour day. The strike was long and hard. Those in charge of the Workhouses made one hundred orphans available to the "Louvre" to replace the strikers. Harbouring many illusions (the spirit of proletarian utopianism was still strong), the strikers tried to establish co-operative shops—"Les Grands Magasins de l'Union des Associations des Employées de Commerce" (The Big Stores of the Union of Business Employees). But they failed and were defeated. They were forced to return to work after two months. And this helps us to understand more clearly why there were so many shop workers amongst the Communards.

We have chosen this example in order to throw light on one aspect which certain historians do not want to see—the connection between the economic struggles at the end of the Empire and the Commune. One can point to the same connection in the case of the bronze workers, the tailors, the engineers, the printers etc. It was in such strikes that many of the future members of the Commune acquired experience and authority. Whatever their social origin, all these men had certain common traits. Many of them had already fought on behalf of the people, one or two like Delescluze or Lefrancais, at the time of the Second Republic. Many of them had been in prison or in exile. But none of them had ever been in a government. Thus none of them had any kind of experience of this kind and they had to improvise everything—and that in the most difficult conditions.

Trends Within the Council

The members of the General Council of the Commune represented, of course, very diverse tendencies. But the word "tendency" should not be interpreted in too rigid a sense in this connection. What were involved were trends in ideas within a very loosely defined framework, constantly shifting in line with changing circumstances. It is therefore very risky to put the Communards into categories. All labelling is subject to caution. It is certain that a majority and a minority were soon distinguishable. The minority was made up of those

[1] The date of the decisive German victory at Sedan.

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members of the Council who were opposed to the creation of a *Committee of Public Safety*. It was composed mainly of the Internationalists and was predominantly working class. These for the most part were men under the influence of Proudhon. But we should avoid being schematic. There were men who had taken part in the practical struggles of the workers and consequently rejected Proudhonist ideas in practice. Despite the teachings of Proudhon, they had supported strikes, taken a direct part in the establishment of trade union branches and carried on a political struggle against the Empire.

Besides, who were the "real" Proudhonists? Tolain was on the side of Versailles and Gustave Chaudey, Proudhon's legal executor, was shot as a traitor by the Commune. It was in this way that "emancipated" Proudhonists often collaborated in action with those very few Communards who were coming closer to Marxist ideas. This was true above all of Frankel, the Hungarian worker. Delegate to the Commission of Labour and of Exchanges, he declared: "*We must never forget that the Revolution of March 18th was made by the working class. If we do nothing for this class, I see no reason for the existence of the Commune*". To a certain extent this was also the view of Benôit Malon. "*Some people say that we cannot concern ourselves with social questions: I want to say that up to now the State has intervened quite enough against the workers. It is the least we can ask that the State today should intervene on the side of the workers*".

The majority was still more divided. A dozen or so members of the Commune have been classed as Blanquists—an extremely vague term. And in any case they, too, were divided. Some still accepted the authority of their former leader. Such were Ferré, Rigault, Chardon and Eudes. But Blanqui was in prison. He had been arrested on March 17th and the Commune had proposed—in vain—to exchange him for the Archbishop of Paris—Mgr. Darboy. Thiers refused, convinced that to "*return Blanqui to the insurrection would be to send it a force equal to any army corps*". Other "Blanquists" proclaimed themselves dissidents. Such were Tridon, Ranvier and Protot.

Alongside these "loyal" and "dissident" Blanquists there were a large number of people we usually describe as "Jacobins", "independent revolutionaries", or simply as "the radicals". Some of these, men like Delescluze or Lefrancais, belonged to the generation of 1848. However, the majority were young. They had not begun to participate in political life until after 1860. They remained very individualistic, touchy and quarrelsome. They took great pleasure in discussing. They were haunted by the Revolution of 1789 which they sought to revive. To this certain facts bear witness—reminiscences during their discussions, adoption of the revolutionary calendar, creation of a *Committee of Public Safety*, the names of certain papers ("Le Père Duchêne" for example) and of certain clubs. Vallès spoke with contempt about "*all this rubbish of the legend of '93*" and Frankel reproached Grousset with "*going to bed and getting up with the Constitution of 1793*".

In reality one should not give too strict a meaning to these terms "majority" and "minority". The "*Déclaration au Peuple Francais*" (Proclamation to the French People), issued on April 19th, which was in fact the Manifesto of the Commune (and, one might add, also its Testament) was adopted almost unanimously, there being only one vote against.

The Peoples' Organisations

Nevertheless in order to get an accurate understanding of the forces which *really* acted during the seventy-two days, it is as well not to concentrate attention solely on the summit—that is, on the General Council of the Commune. As "*Le Próletaire*" wrote in its issue of May, 1871, "*the Commune—is the people themselves*". It is therefore essential to remember the organisations of the people.

We have already mentioned those which existed before March 18th. Others arose and developed during the Commune itself. There were first and foremost the Clubs, some of which had been revived as early as September 4th, 1870. Their numbers increased greatly after March 18th. They were particularly numerous in the centre of the capital and frequently used churches as their meeting places. These clubs were very popular haunts. Within them discussions took place about all manner of questions and they played a definite educational role. Conscious of the need for vigilance, they denounced traitors, monopolists and those who sought to evade service in the National Guard. They never hesitated to criticise the Commune when they felt that it was lacking in boldness. You could read statements like the following, which appeared in *Prolétaire* expressing the outlook of the Clubs, on May 10th. "So what are you waiting for?" it wrote, "Don't just content yourselves with promising the people the advent of Socialism like the priests promise their votaries the joys of Paradise to be enjoyed after death. Certain reforms *do* demand time. Others, on the contrary, can be carried out at once".

The action of the women was also decisive. "The Union of Women for the Defence of Paris and the Care of the Wounded" was overwhelmingly working class in composition, more so than that of the Committees in the localities. Like the Clubs (in which, by the way, they were very active) they demanded immediate measures.

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The Commune therefore provides us with the picture of a democratic movement on two levels. At the top, there was a General Council elected on the basis of complete universal suffrage. Below, a great abundance of popular organisations. Of course it is correct not to idealise the Commune. The relations between the two levels of democracy did not always develop without problems and friction. On May 19th, Charles Amouroux, a hat-maker, declared at a meeting that "the Commune can make mistakes and has made them—it has not sufficiently taken its inspiration from the popular movement. Nor has it kept sufficient connections with the Clubs".

Nevertheless, despite these inadequacies, conflicts and at times, a flood of oratory, the mass organisations played the role of intermediaries between those elected to office in the capital and the people themselves.

A Complex Event

Despite all the differences of opinion, and despite all the weaknesses and mistakes (the failure to take the offensive against Versailles on March 19th, lack of vigilance, the taste for phrase-mongering, the respect for the Bank of France), the work of the Commune is of very great significance. Some have spoken of the myth of the Commune based on the theme of the "two Communes" on the presumption that the Commune had a double existence. Once vanquished, it was supposed to have begun to live again, to lead another existence—in people's memories. This second life was supposed to owe its origin to Marx's formulations in the "Civil War in France", taken up in their turn by Lenin. In fact the Commune was an event the deep significance of which is still under study. It lives on also as an idea and experience in the formation and development of revolutionary theory and as a recollection in the collective memory of the working people. We have to examine whether there is any contradiction between these two Communes.

We should start from the conception that may sound very obvious, but about which there has not been sufficient thought, namely that the Commune was an extremely complex event. It reveals, when examined through a magnifying glass, diverse elements and even contradictory aspects. For a century now, instead of examining the Commune as it was, that is to say as *a whole*, there has been too much of a tendency to isolate one of its elements and to give it pride of place. And this has led to a distortion of the event and to placing in the category of myths those aspects which have been rejected or ignored.

For example, it is not possible to deny the *national* character of the Commune. It is clear that patriotic revulsion against the treachery of the so-called Government of National Defence played an important role. It is clear too that some people rallied to the Commune moved solely by their patriotic enthusiasm. Such a one was Colonel Rossel. This explains how the French "nationalists" have tried to "take back" the Paris Commune. The recent book by General Zeller (*Les Hommes de la Commune*) is striking evidence of this. This General, sentenced for his part in the OAS[2] has spent his leisure hours in the prison at Tulle studying those great patriots, the Communards. This is a very one-sided view of the Commune events. It fails to see that, in reality, patriotism for the Communards had a social content which could not be separated either from the social aspirations of the Commune nor from the developing international outlook which characterised it.

Patriotism and Internationalism

The international character of the Paris Commune is undeniable. Many foreigners took part in the Commune, "admitted to the honour of dying for an immortal cause" in Marx's splendid words. There were the Italians, supporters of Garibaldi for the most part—like Amilcare Cipriani, companion in arms of Flourens, the Communard who was assassinated (168 Italians were arrested); many Belgians (737 of them were listed amongst the foreigners arrested); Hungarians like Frankel known for his integrity and lucidity; Russians like Elizabeth Dimitrievna (who corresponded with Marx) and Anna Korvina Kukovskaya; Poles like Dombrowski and Wroblevski (there were more than 300 Poles in the ranks of the "Communards"). Thus scattered amongst the defenders of Paris, there were men and women who had come from all countries. Even when they did not belong to the *International Working Men's Association*, they understood without any reserve that the cause of the Commune was their own. The Commune for its part made no distinctions whatsoever between those who had rallied to its banner. The question—"Can foreigners be admitted to the Commune?" was raised on the Commission responsible for supervising the elections to the General Council of the Commune. And it arose specifically in connection with the election of Frankel in the 13th Arrondissement of Paris. The Commission answered—"considering that the flag of the Commune is that of the Universal Republic, considering that every city has the right to bestow the title of citizen on foreigners who serve it, . . . the Commission is of the opinion that foreigners can be admitted and proposes the admission of Citizen Frankel".

[2] The extreme right wing organisation which resisted every attempt to end the Algerian War—*Organisation of the Secret Army*.

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On a World Scale

The elite of the working class of all countries demonstrated their solidarity with the Commune. To quote just Bebel, Socialist Deputy in the Reichstag, who thus replied to Bismark: "All the proletariat of Europe and all who still retain in their hearts the feeling for liberty and independence, have their eyes fixed on Paris. . . . Not many decades will pass before the battle-cry of the Parisian proletariat—war to the palaces, peace to the cottages, death to poverty and to idleness—becomes the battle cry of all the proletariat of Europe". One need only glance through the columns of the *Journal Officiel* of the Commune to note the warmth with which every sign of solidarity was received.

The Commune, a movement of national protest, was at the same time an episode in the class struggle on a world scale. Confronting the alliance of Thiers and Bismark there arose another alliance, the fighting alliance of the proletariat (at least of its most conscious elite), united in the same will to struggle and in the same hope across the frontiers.

Class Composition of the Communards

Here is another example of the danger of seeing only certain aspects of the Commune. There were not only workers amongst the Communards, there were many petty-bourgeois who threw themselves into the turmoil—small shopkeepers, artisans, journalists etc. We have already noted that there were relatively large numbers of them in the General Council of the Commune—quite simply because the average level of education was higher amongst them than amongst the masses of the workers. On this basis some historians have described the Commune as an insurrection of the petty-bourgeoisie. Take care, one can go too far in this direction. Starting from the (undeniable) fact that declassed sections intervened in the insurrection the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of July 15th, 1871, concluded that the Commune "was the triumph and the end of *la Bohême*" (the shiftless, the Bohemians).

In reality, all informed research agrees that the Commune was most certainly fundamentally an insurrection, the dominant element of which was the working class. The complete report presented to the National Assembly by General Appert (the man in charge of the repression) is most revealing. Classifying those condemned according to their occupations, he listed 2901 day labourers, 2,293 bricklayers, 1,659 woodworkers, 1,598 clerks, 1,492 shoe-makers, 1,065 shop assistants, 210 hatters, 382 carpenters, 206 dressmakers, 172 goldsmiths, 636 cabinet-makers, 98 instrument makers, 227 tinsmiths, 224 foundry workers, 184 engravers, 193 lace-makers, 836 house painters, 106 bookbinders, 283 stone-carvers, 681 tailors, 347 tanners, 157 moulders, 766 stonemasons. Out of a total of 34,722 people who were imprisoned, 84 per cent were workers of one kind or another.

Further the number of workers killed, imprisoned or who disappeared in Paris following on the Bloody Week, is estimated at 100,000. The class character of the repression, the enormous fright of the possessing class, alike confirm that in truth, it was the Parisian proletariat such as it was in 1871 that was the life and soul of the Commune. Those who, like Marx, affirmed this in 1871, did not create a myth.

Socialist Character

The *socialist* character of the Commune seems like a myth to some. It appears to them as a legend woven by the devout hands of Socialist theorists. Once again let us not pass beyond the chronological boundaries of the event. It could only be a matter of the socialism of the time, or more precisely, of the *socialisms* of the time. Seen from this standpoint, the Commune could only be a kind of testing ground for the old socialist trends (Proudhonist, Blanquist), which were plainly in the majority. Scientific socialism, as we have already noted, was understood but imperfectly, by a few people who were in touch with Marx. This explains the confusion and the failure to complete the various projects.

But the intentions were clear. One can read in the *Journal Officiel* of March 21st, 1871:

> "In view of the shortcomings and treacheries of the governing classes, the proletariat of the capital have understood that the time has arrived for them to save the situation and to take the direction of public affairs into their own hands".

And again:

> "The proletariat understands that it is its permanent duty and its absolute right to take its destiny into its own hands and to ensure victory by taking power".

Here the perspectives of the Communards are quite clear. They were fighting, it is clear, to lay the foundations for a new world, a world in which the exploitation of man by man would have disappeared. But for the moment the Commune as a Government acted on the side of the workers and on their behalf. On April 16th it decided to list all abandoned workshops before taking them over and handing over their management to those who worked in them. On April 27th it issued a decree prohibiting employers from imposing fines and making arbitrary deductions from the workers' wages—one of the demands advanced most frequently by the workers at the end of the Empire.

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The same applies to the decree prohibiting night work in the bakeries. It is true that Frankel described this latter decree as "*the only true socialist measure taken by the Commune*", but one should not exaggerate this. What is important is that, in face of the employers, the Commune demanded its application. Of much greater significance was the decree concerning conditions in the markets[3]. Preference was "*always*" to be given to the workers' production co-operatives which were fairly numerous. In addition the appropriate trade union body was to be involved in working out the conditions operating in the markets and the price list was to indicate "the minimum price of labour by the day or the wages given to men and women workers" working in the market.

Historical Importance

To conclude, after a century of detailed research on the Commune, it seems that Marx's interpretation was the scientific one. It stuck to reality. Starting from the *practice* of the Communards, Marx elaborated fundamental *theoretical* conclusions regarding the necessity for replacing the bourgeois state by a new type of state and the urgency of a revolutionary class party. It is quite evident that the Communards were not fully conscious of what it was they were undertaking. It was not on the basis of any doctrinal conception that they created the first worker's government in history—but because circumstances compelled them to do so.

The historical importance of the Commune is, therefore, that it was the first experience of a dictatorship of the working class (in alliance with the petty-bourgeoisie), the first heroic attempt by the proletariat to direct and accelerate the march of history against Capitalism and towards Socialism. This action, of course, took place in an historically determined context, and this explains both its audacity ("storming heaven") and its limitations.

(Translated by Jack Cohen)

[3] On May 13th, Co-operatives of small shopkeepers were given priority in the public markets.

The Communard Exiles in Britain

Stanley Hutchins

(We complete below the article by Stanley Hutchins. The first two parts were published in the March and April issues of Marxism Today).

After the defeat Camélinat went into hiding in Eastern Paris and was able, after an interval, to come to England! He also renewed contact with fellow exiles, particularly with Albert Theisz and Victor Richard.

Soon he was in work in Birmingham, his employers being Elkingtons. His wife kept a greengrocers at Aston and he stayed in the Midland town until the Amnesty of 1880. Zélie was born there. Camélinat continued his trade union activities in England, two of his friends being engineers Henri Martin, (another exile) and Debrelkeers.

Camélinat was elected Socialist deputy in 1885 and lived in the same flat in workers' Belleville (Paris) until his death in 1932 at the age of 92. It was Camélinat who proposed the construction of the Metropolitan Underground railway in Paris.

His speech (an official copy of which is in the possession of the present writer) was interrupted by expressions of doubt as to the possibilities, and the fact that Camélinat addressed the Chamber as "citoyens".

He represented the French Socialist Party at conferences, including the ILP, and had correspondence with Keir Hardie and Bruce Glasier. Tom Mann was a friend of both Camélinat and Jean Allemane, the latter an exile to New Caledonia but not to England. It was Camélinat's vote in 1920 which determined that "l'Humanité", the French Socialist Party organ founded by Jaurès, became that of the Communist Party of France. The delegation which solicited his vote (he was then 80 years of age) was led by Marcel Cachin.

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When asked once why he had not a son he replied "Marcel is my boy[4]"[5]

Today the workers of the Paris Mint acknowledge with respect the improved conditions brought about by Camélinat and continued to this day and they honour his memory accordingly.

Jules Johannard

A much valued member of the Commune Council was Jules Johannard. Although only 28 years of age at the time he had already had a deal of experience in organising the workers, helping to build up the International Working Men's Association, and representing Italy on the General Council of the International. He had fought on the barricades and was a type of political commissar, working side by side with General La Cécilia.

During his exile here he mainly lived in Manchester. At the period of his death he lived at 174 Bury New Road. He was a traveller, originally in artificial flowers, in Paris. Here in England, he represented a mineral water manufacturer. He, of course, was well in touch with Eugène Dupont, Secretary of the International who, at that time, lived in Manchester.

Johannard represented all that was worthy of a communard. Lissagaray wrote highly of him.

There are many dates given of his death in the various reference and history books (1871/1888/1914) but the definitive date is 16th November, 1882. He had collapsed at Euston Station on his return from a short "business" call to Paris, after a very rough Channel crossing and having had little food, which condition it was believed lowered his bodily resistance. He was buried on 20th November 1882 in London in a common grave, without a Minister being present.[6]

Communards in Clerkenwell

On 26th March after the elections to the Council of the Commune, the Commune was officially proclaimed amidst enthusiastic scenes outside the Town Hall of Paris by Gabriel Ranvier.

He came to live, on the fall of the Commune, at Clerkenwell, at 160 St. John's Street. He was condemned in his absence in 1871 to forced labour and on another charge, in 1873, to death.

A near neighbour was Alphonse Marchand, a Captain in the National Guard who lived in the same street but at No. 170. He was succeeded at this address by another exile who teamed up with a man named Frank (a surname) and established a business of glass shade manufacturers under the name of Frank & Bazin. The latter had a son who was given the name of George Denton Bazin, whose descendants still support the principles and aims of the Commune.

Also in Clerkenwell lived Pierre Vésinier, who succeeded Longuet as editor of the *Journal Officiel* (the newspaper of the Commune) but introduced prominently his own writings.

This change was a backward step in the light of future events. Also, at 13 King Square nearby lived Joseph V. Weber who collaborated with Vésinier, when both were in London, to discredit Karl Marx. Vésinier had been expelled in 1868 from the International. He continued his anti-International tactics on his second exile in England after the Commune. He was able to rally a few communards on his side one of whom proved later to be a French police spy. This group, including also Landeck and Oudet, met at "The Three Kings" public house in Clerkenwell Close. In England Vésinier wrote a book in which he libelled a number of his old comrades of the recent events in Paris. He returned to Paris and died there in 1902.

Some Polish Exiles

In Islington at 40 Colebrook Row lived General Walery Wroblewski, born in Lithuania, but always considered a Pole who was elected a member of the General Council of the International at the first Conference after the fall of the Commune, held in September 1871. He continued his agitation for Polish freedom, publishing a famous address from there in 1874.

He was a regular visitor to Marx and a good correspondent. In exile he suffered a deal from poverty. As a military chief of the Commune he was very capable. He organised the defence of the Left Bank of the Seine and his tactical withdrawals in series have won much praise.

Partly because of the state of his health he went to Nice and died there in 1908. Another militant Pole was the brother of the famous General Jaroslav Dombrowski, who died on the barricades in Montmartre while repelling the onslaught of the enemy. The surviving Dombrowski lived at 14 Barnsbury Street. Much was done to discredit him

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[4] The late Zélie Camélinat, daughter of the old communard told the present writer that the first thing her father did on arriving in England was to go to the house of Karl Marx. Camélinat had been in London before, in 1867, when he attended the funeral of an exile from the 1851 coup d'etat of Louis Napoleon. On the boat from France an Englishman became very friendly with Camélinat who, when he was safely in British territorial waters, revealed his identity. He was assisted through the customs by the acquaintance who turned out to be a business man.

[5] In a speech by Zélie, a daughter, at a celebration dinner in honour of the Commune.

[6] For a fuller biography see *Labour Monthly*, May, 1958, "First Internationalist and Communard" by S. G. Hutchins.

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by the reactionaries, the chief in this being Vésinier, but the present writer from the available evidence believes that he lived honorably as a man and a comrade.

One of the descriptive writers for French understanding of life in England in the seventies and eighties of the last century was Hector France. During the Commune he contributed to many journals. On the fall of the Commune he came to Charlton and Blackheath to teach. In his leisure time he walked in and around London as a tramp, recording the hard lives of the down-and-outs and the more colourful lives of the better-off workers. He stayed in England many years after the amnesty.

Also settling down to life in London was Jules Magny. An interpreter at the London Law Courts; he also taught the French language.

He lived at 110 Avondale Square, Old Kent Road, where he successfully cultivated a grape vine. He also had a printing business at 47 Melford Road, East Dulwich, S.E. London. He remained faithful to the Commune, proud that he had fought on the barricades. He became an active London member of the Social Democratic Federation.

Léo Meillet was a mayor of a district of Paris before the Commune and became a civil commissioner to General Wroblewski.

He managed to escape to England and went on to Glasgow to live at 150 Buccleugh Street and lecture in that city. He also went to Edinburgh. A very active member of the Commune's Council, he was a great humanitarian.

He died at Bordeaux while still principal of the mental asylum there in 1909.

Painter and Sculptors

Many artists threw in their lot with the Commune. The sculptors Dalou and Carpeaux and the painters, Tissot and Camille Pissaro are examples. Felix Régamay continued as an outstanding illustrator of periodicals and newspapers.

How many pass behind the Royal Exchange, in the heart of the City of London, and give a second glance at the mother and two infants sculpted so realistically by Dalou? Or know that an Australian visitor to the City of London in the seventies of the last century wrote to the Common Council protesting at its "obscenity?" Or know that its Communard sculptor became a professor of sculpture at the Victoria and Albert Museum?

There is a collection of his bronzes both there and at the Walthamstow Art Gallery where William Morris, a champion of the Commune, was born. One art reference book states that "he laid the foundation for the vast improvement in British sculpture which followed his appointment". He lived and had a studio at 217 Kings Road, Chelsea. A next door neighbour was Ellen Terry, the famous British actress. He first was a captain in the National Guard during the Franco-Prussian war and, during the Commune, was elected a member of the Federation of Artists, and became active therein. He was sentenced in his absence to life-long forced labour in May 1874 (Note that three years after the Commune trials were being held, even if the accused were no longer in France). Dalou returned to Paris after the amnesty and executed some very important commissions.

Among his works are the recumbent figure of Auguste Blanqui (elected a member of the Commune Council he never could take his seat as he had been arrested whilst ill just before the outbreak of the Commune) who spent nearly forty years in jail! And the spread eagled figure also in bronze, depicting Victor Noir lying dead, shot by Piere Bonaparte in 1870, when Noir was carrying a challenge to a duel as a second to the challenger. Also in Paris, in the Place de la Nation, is a large ornamental work which deserves closer inspection than normally given.

Langevin and Delahaye

Two skilled engineering workers, Camille Langevin and Victor Delahaye were active before, during and after the Commune. Both were to serve on the General Council of the International Working Men's Association.

The first lived at five Lower Eglinton Road, Shooters Hill, and the other at Clapham. It was Delahaye who won John Burns over to Socialism, and they at first were employed in the same workshop where they were active in organising the workers. Langevin returned to Paris after the amnesty and remained an active worker until his death. Victor Delahaye later returning to Paris was appointed to Government Commissions on Labour questions.

A faithful personality among the exiles was Jules Andrieu (at times given incorrectly, as Andrieux, and this has sometimes led to a belief that he was the police spy and informer of that name).

Before the events of March 1871 he was employed in a senior capacity in the Town Hall of Paris. Elected to the Council of the Commune he proved active and intelligent. He was a combatant during the final week of the Commune.

He lived at Richmond Gardens, Uxbridge Road, West London, and taught the French language. He lived frugally. After the amnesty he was appointed by Gambetta French Consul to Jersey, one of the Channel Islands.

Bergeret and Barrère

Other important exiles who first came to London and then went to Jersey were General of the Com-

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mune Emile Bergeret who became a photographer there, Eugène Chatelaine, and Lissagaray.

Lissagaray's stay was brief but Eugène Chatelaine, opened a chemist's shop and did very good business until it was discovered that he was not registered according to the then new Act of 1868. He had not passed the necessary qualifications and examinations when in England. He proved to be one of the best poets of the Commune and a book of his poems was published successfully on his return to France.

Originally he was a journalist and had fought on the barricades in 1848 and against the coup d'état of Louis Napoleon in 1851. He was elected to the Central Committee of the National Guard in 1870.

One of the younger and more personally ambitious of the communards in London was Camille Barrère whose address was The Arts Club, Hanover Square, W. He was appointed Ambassador to Rome by Gambetta on his return from exile.

The International and the Exiles

We have, in some measure, recorded where the communard exiles lived and worked individually. They had various means and methods of gathering together, either in groups or en masse.

The International Working Men's Association was in existence to help the communards to understand that, although they had suffered a defeat in Paris, the movements abroad were not disbanded and that their fight was understood and appreciated by many workers and others, both here and abroad. Also, that measures were being taken to help the "wanted" communards in France to get away to safety. On 12th June Marx wrote to Professor Beesly, who had presided at the inaugural meeting of the International Working Men's Association:

> "A woman friend of mine will be going to Paris in three or four days. I am giving her the proper passes for some members of the Commune who are still hidden in Paris. If you or one of your friends have any commissions there please write to me".

It is known that Lavrov (a Russian Marxist) travelled to and from Paris to facilitate contact between Marx and the Commune.

Robert Applegarth, the trade union leader on the General Council of the IWMA personally assisted, at great risk, by allowing his passport to be used to effect the crossing of the Channel by would-be exiles. At the Conference of Delegates in September 1871 the following exiles were elected to the General Council, Jules Johannard, Charles Longuet, C. Martin, E. Vaillant, A. Serailler, B. Wroblewski, Charles Rochat and Léo Frankel. One or two had already served on the General Council.

Refugee Fund

On the Tuesday evening, 27th June 1871, the General Council agreed to start a refugee fund. The subscription list was headed "IWMA Refugee Fund—in aid of the French Communal Exiles". Marx, the German, immediately handed in £4: Jung, the Swiss, handed over £2 on behalf of Lavrov, the Russian. A good internationalist start! Later it was reported that P. A. Taylor, M.P. and Sir Charles Dilke, M.P. had each given £5 to the fund.

In the late eighteen seventies there was launched a very strong subscription list to aid the deported who were suffering in New Caledonia—this also was initiated in London.

A number of prominent British people of varying shades of liberal and radical opinion such as Frederick Harrison, Charles Kingsley, A. J. Mundella, Sir Charles Dilke and Professor Edward Beesly helped to find employment for the exiles.

Gladstone, the Prime Minister, on two questions associated with their presence here—employment and extradition proceedings of the French Government—took the correct stand. It was the police "vigilance" and worse, which harassed the exiles and threatened their security. It was after the French Government's amnesty of 1880 that the Gladstone administration tightened up the controls of alien immigration.

The British Government under Gladstone feared the return to Britain of the revolutionaries who might again be forced to leave France, due to either severe economic conditions or because of the political crisis which many people here and abroad feared or expected.

Circles, Clubs, Restaurants and Pubs

The exiles with the fraternal support of British sympathisers to the Commune soon busied themselves to make their enforced stay as useful as possible. There was an important "Circle of Social Studies" in Francis Street off Tottenham Court Road.

Lissagaray was a principal founder. It was not confined to the French; it is known that Frederick Lessner was one of the regular attenders. He was one who served time in a German fortress, following the Cologne Communist trial. The subscription fee was 3/- per month. Quite a sum in those days! Jules Andrieu was the proposer for membership of Verlaine. Karl Marx also became a member.

Also, there were premises in Stephen's Mews, Tottenham Court Road, access to which was by a wooden staircase, well remembered by the present writer. Later this was made so comfortable inside and popular that it earned the title of the International Club. This was too much for the police

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who made an excuse to raid it and this led to its closure.

A restaurant whose proprietress was Madame Audenet, became a congenial place to discuss mutual problems and the current political situation. This was in Charlotte Street, West London.

Also public houses, (although beer was not generally popular for the French) were much used, particularly "The Three Doves" in Berwick Street (then, as now, a market place), "The Blue Posts" in Newman Street (where many exiles lived) and Lord Monson's Arms, 56 Tottenham Street, almost opposite the place where, later, the Communist Club was formed by, amongst others, Frederick Engels. This latter was at No. 49.

Lectures and Police Spies

An important series of lectures was held by the exiles themselves at "La Fraternelle", as the club was known, which met at "The Spread Eagle", Charles Street, W. London, opposite the gates of the Middlesex Hospital. The first, held on Friday 10th November 1871 was addressed by J. B. Clément, composer of "Chanson des Cérises" (known to all French children) and an elected member of the Commune. His subject was "The Decrees of the Commune".

On the following Friday the Club had as its lecturer Captain Ludomir Martuzewicz, a Polish officer of the 20th legion of the National Guard and a loyal fighter for the Commune; appropriately his subject was "Standing Armies".

There was a large gathering of refugees, just one year after the severest fighting in Paris, on the 24th May 1872. This was at the Canonbury Arms, St. Mary's Street, Islington, North London. 180 Communards were present. They assembled in the Club Room. A police spy was recognised and forcibly ejected after refusing to leave. The proprietor was told by the police that his licence would be taken away if he permitted his premises to be used for such meetings again. Three weeks later a similar meeting was held at "The Spread Eagle", Charles Street. About 135 were present in a large room which had been booked by one of the exiles. Again a police spy was observed and challenged. On representations by the "stranger" the landlord insisted that no "secret" meetings would be held and the gathering broke up.

So much for private organised meetings in pubs!

In September 1872 Eugène Vermersch lectured on "Théophile Gautier". This was held on the first floor of a cafe at No. 6 Old Compton Street, W. The English and French audience applauded alike the quality of the discourse and the subject itself.

The next lecture there was on "Auguste Blanqui", the famous revolutionary who is a study in fervour and consistency even if one could not accept his methods. When he died in 1881 he had served nearly forty years imprisonment, in island dungeons and fortresses.

Of course communards had individual invitations to functions but, owing to being in Britain largely on sufferance, little publicity was given to these.

More Clubs and Commemorations

Twenty years after their arrival in London a Social Evening was held in a disused chapel at 55 Grafton Street, near Goodge Street station. English and French contributions in song and verse were given. Louise Michel read a poem, composed by herself. The Scottish poet, Robert Buchanan, often supported similar functions, and Eleanor Marx, the youngest daughter of Karl Marx, on one occasion recited "The Pied Piper of Hamelin", and received great applause.

Other places in which substantial gatherings were held were the Atheneum Hall, where Goodge Street Underground station is situated, and the Philharmonic Theatre in the High Street, Islington. At the time of writing the ornate building still stands; it was last used as a cinema.

At No. 6 Rose Street (now Manette Street) Charing Cross Road, there was an International Club. Many exiles used this and it was here that Louise Michel was welcomed on her arrival in 1880 from the penal settlement of New Caledonia. And it *was* a welcome! The place once witnessed an incident which was a matter of grim laughter for years when an informer was recognised and pitched out of an upper floor window without ceremony.

The writer remembers the original facade, and although the appearance has completely altered can identify the exact site. The Rose Street Club was succeeded by one which went farther North of Tottenham Court Road, and was almost a stone's throw from the original place where the *idea* of an International Association of working men was born and discussed.

This club was known as the Autonomy Club, of 6 Windmill Street, again off Tottenham Court Road. The larger gatherings here mostly met on a Saturday or Sunday night and were in the basement. William Morris, George Bernard Shaw and H. N. Brailsford were among the lecturers, besides communards.

Originally the Club catered for communards and sympathisers to the cause of the Commune, with members also of various shades of Socialist opinion. Eventually, the Club became almost exclusively anarchist and when there was a "propaganda by deed" incident in London by an anarchist the Club was set on fire by some fanatic as a reprisal. The wave of individual acts of violence frightened

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and alienated the general public. The premises were never again opened by a political organisation. George R. Sims (a near neighbour of a journalist escapee from New Caedonia, Henri Rochefort) wrote "In a Cellar in Soho". This describes the dying thoughts and words of a communard exile in London, of his experiences of the Paris battles and of his companion, a woman, Marguerite, who shares them, the fighting in the last days, of the resistance in the Père Lachaise cemetery, before the escape to England:

> "Here my own, mid the tombs of the dead,
> Let us fight for the children of France.
> In the wind wave our banners of red,
> In the May sun our drawn sabres glance.
> 'This they glory, O France, when our girls
> And our women for thee give their lives,
> When a weak arm the keen sabre whirls,
> And aims straight at our Fatherland's gyves.
> You are dead, Marguerite, for our France,
> And your name shall be write on her scroll;
> When they find your poor body, perchance,
> They will maul you, and dig you a hole.
> I must fly—I have fought—we have lost.
> Vive la Commune! but still sauve qui peut
> Henceforth I'm a waif, tempest-tossed
> But I fly, for Thiers' butchers pursue",
> etc.

Henri Rochefort continued to publish his "La Lanterne" from London. It was cut down to but a few inches in size, and went to France inside the pages of *The Daily Telegraph*! It was also published in Belgium and Switzerland, in the same format.

Nearer the City there was formed a Central Democratic Club, at 28 Grays Inn Road. Also, near there, were occasional gatherings at "The Duke of York" public house at 7 Henry Street. Both were very convenient to those who lived in the Eastern area and near the Angel. Near the latter was the Restaurant Français at 22 High Street, Islington, and a little cheaper fare at Thierry Creton's Refreshment Rooms at 17/18 High Street.

Demonstrations, Meetings, Banquets

It became common, when British people celebrated or commemorated the Commune, that communard speakers should be invited. The first great gathering was called for the first anniversary of the start of the Commune, on 18th March 1872. The sponsors were "Members of the International, The Democrats of London and the Refugees of the Commune".

A Swiss was billed to preside, with an Englishman and a Frenchman as vice-presidents. There were 15 other Frenchmen, one Hungarian, one Irishman and a German (Karl Marx) with six English speakers, to make it a truly international gathering. However, three days before the meeting was due, the lessee of the hall sent a note of cancellation. In spite of strong representations, and a threat of breach of contract the meeting was declared "off", at this building which afterwards was known as the Queen's Hall and where later, in 1896, a part of the International Socialist Conference was held.[7]

An alternative place was difficult to find at such short notice, but the much smaller premises where the "Cercle d'Etudes Sociales" met, at Francis Street, W. London, was utilised.

When the small band of five escapees from New Caledonia came to London, via New York, there was a reception committee formed to pay them due honours. One event was a banquet in London on 3rd June 1874. The treasurer was L. Boursier, who had been a member of the Central Committee of the National Guard.

Annual meetings were held under various auspices for many years. Louise Michel often spoke at these gatherings. At one of them where she was a speaker George Lansbury seconded a motion in support of the principles of the Commune. Eleanor Marx and William Morris were always willing to attend and speak. As a mark of international solidarity often, socialists, communists and anarchists, up to the end of the last century, had a common platform for the Commune.

Communard Cafés

The favourite places for refreshment appear to have been in a limited geographical circle. Two in the Leicester Square area "l'Etoile" and the "Café de la Sabloniere et de Provence" must be recorded. For many there were cafés where the fare was cheaper and the surroundings much less congenial.

Some exiles, according to Henri Rochefort (who frequented the high class "Café Royal" in Regent Street) lived on as little as "fifty and even forty francs a month". The franc then was equivalent to 9½d. He wrote "The outlaws of the Commune clubbed together, and sent out to this evening market to obtain at incredibly low prices nourishment of exactly the same quality as that which the rich inhabitants had purchased at its full price in the morning".

There is evidence that more and better French restaurants were to be found in the West End of London after the eighties of the last century when many of the exiles decided to make a permanent home here.

Travel between the two countries became easier and cheaper. Most of the exiles were ignorant of the English language on arrival and a night school was organised, in conjunction with sympathisers

[7] At this conference many communards were present as delegates, some former exiles.

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here. Rimbaud went to as many public events as possible and conversed with people on many subjects as often as he could to improve his grammar and accent.

In the nineties Louise Michel regularly patronised "The Enterprise" in Long Acre when Tom Mann was the licensee. Tom was a personal friend also of Jean Allemane, a courageous fighter for the Commune, and chief of the barricade leading to the Panthéon.

One of the bravest leaders of the Commune was Theophile Ferré (a close personal friend of Louise Michel) who was sentenced, along with two other communards to death. The three were shot on 28th November, 1871 and died without remorse. Eighteen exiles in Britain, including General Eudes, G. Ranvier, E. Vaillant, F. Cournet and Jules Vallés, wrote a joint letter of sympathy to Ferré's sister on 30th November. It was an expression also of solidarity and of the certainty of the immortality of the names of these martyrs of the Commune. In the photograph of the execution only the priest (who was not invited by the victims) wept. Ferré is seen leaning nonchantly against the execution stake apparently enjoying his last smoke!

Politics of the Exiles

Naturally with so many "wings" of opinion, of divided counsels, and varying personalities, there were separate organisations of the exiles.

In view of this it is surprising how few really personal antagonisms there were shown in England.

Most of those who had fought on the barricades proved loyal and active here, and many continued thus on their return to Paris.

In 1874 a Manifesto was issued in London by many prominent communards. It declared that they were communists. But later divisions among these signatories arose and there were Blanquist, Anarchist and opportunist interpretations and actions which in a measure bedevilled the workers' movements in France.

There was a Congress in Marseilles in 1879, before the full amnesty of 1880, and a number of exiles tried to bring the Congress round to forward thinking and advanced action. The names included Johannard, Langevin, Lissagaray, Longuet and Thiesz, all of whom have been previously mentioned.

Another was Eudes, a General of the Commune, who died while making a speech in the French Chamber to which he was elected after the amnesty. He had lived in London.

The taunt *and lie* that "the communards burnt Paris" followed the exiles. The women were referred to as "pétroleuses". It takes longer and is much more difficult to prove a lie to be one, and the resources of the movement internationally were never strong until after the second world war.

Who were the Incendiaries?

It was on the instructions of Thiers ("that monstrous gnome" as Karl Marx termed him) that shells from Mont Valérien, the fortress outside Paris, fell on the city on the morning of the first of April and continued at intervals. And when the reactionary soldiers, from the provinces mainly, attacked the Commune on 24th May they were primed to believe that the communards were wanton fire-raisers and murderers.

On taking positions held by the communards they called to the remaining occupants of the houses "*open the shutters—close the windows*" and either then or later if not satisfied, fired inside, thus causing conflagrations from the leaden bullets.

Of course there were buildings that were fired for defensive purposes on the part of the Commune and this is nothing new in civil or national wars. But the excuse for vicious sentences, either for execution, forced labour or banishment was in a considerable number of cases for burning or destruction of property. One of the communards was spoken of as "Brunel the Burner". He became a tutor of the French language on the training ship Brittania at Dartmouth but it is doubtful if any of his British naval students or fellow tutors really believed that for which he was named and sentenced. Certainly one document purported to have originated from him has been declared a forgery.

"Chains We'll Shiver"

The exiles' lives here, in general, were very uncertain. They were subject to interrogation and abuse. Many for a long time were shadowed, sometimes by French spies official or unofficial.

Certainly, the French were good observers and recorders of the English ways of life and scene. Obviously they had a great regard for their fellow men.

One thing is certain—those who wrote of the conditions of the working people here, Jules Vallès, Hector France, Charles Malato, Louise Michel, and many others, did so from an international point of view, knowing that poverty and the uncertainty of existence was, and still is, a class question.

In the words of Eugène Pottier of Paris, New York, Manchester and Gravesend:

> Our own right hand the chains we'll shiver,
> Chains of hatred, greed and fear.

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Discussion Contributions on:

Socialism, Democracy and the One-Party System

John Tarver

The great advantage of articles that rely heavily on quotations is that they drive the reader back to the original sources. These often prove to be the more profitable reading of the two.

In this sense, Monty Johnstone's three-part article on Socialism, Democracy and the One-Party System, which hung its argument on 213 pegs, has merit as well as scholarship. As the first instalment of a guide to Communist action in the closing quarter of the twentieth century (which its range and tone infer) it is misleading, divisive, rather too trendy to have much in common with dialectics and, alas, cleverly ingenious.

The trouble begins in the first paragraph. Here—unintentionally, I am sure—Johnstone uses an old device. He throws in a premise which the reader, not yet attuned to the theme, takes for granted but which is really false. "Above all" he says, on the subject that like no other arouses "such sharp divergencies and such passionate debate", the question of "the nature of democracy under socialism revolves around the issue of the one-party system, the role of the Communist Party and the right of opposition of other parties, both socialist, non-socialist and anti-socialist".

So it may seem to Monty, now, in his library. During the thirty years of his political activity the matter has looked somewhat different to most of us. In criticism from the public, including friends and foes, *freedom for the individual* has certainly aroused the deepest concern. Within the Marxist movement, it has been *inner-party democracy*. The correct definition of this absolutely crucial problem of socialist democracy is vital. In this case, what flows from Monty's faulty "objective premise" is a wrong-headed train of thought presuming that the solution of all the well-known problems *depends on* a pluralist party system. Never in the minds of Marx and Engels, not in Lenin's teaching nor in the practice of the socialist states has this issue occupied any central place. Yet according to Monty everything else to do with socialist democracy "revolves around" this non-existent centre.

What Marx and Engels Wanted

Johnstone quotes Marx and Engels thirty-five times. Take quotation 17. Marx, we read, was very conscious that the political expression adopted by workers "necessarily varies very much". What does Marx say next? His following sentence[1] reads: "The community of action which the (First) International called into being, the exchange of ideas . . . and finally the direct discussions at the General Congresses will by degrees create for the general workers' movement its common theoretical programme also". This is what Marx longed to see! Not the diversity, which he understood, but the unity. Johnstone admits that Marx was here "regarding the working class as potentially the most homogeneous", but he is less scrupulous when quoting Engels in his very next line. Before his observation[2] that "the 'solidarity of the proletariat' is everywhere being realised in different party groupings" he had stated what "alone explains why"—namely, the fact that "at every stage part of the people get stuck and do not join in the further advance".

In these two letters the founders of Marxism were castigating the disruptive activities of Bakunin and others. They were speaking of the political diversity of the working-class movement *with regret*. Monty is a little unfair to them but much more unfair to us, for he makes what they wrote as *descriptive* comment then sound like *prescriptive* advice today. It is much more likely that they would have wished and assumed the labour movement would attain "its common theoretical programme" by now, a full century later. Is it not therefore a trifle presumptuous of Monty to follow these abbreviated quotations with his lengthy argumentation about Marx, Engels and democracy —in the course of which he produces *not one*

[1] Marx to Engels, March 5th, 1869; *Selected Correspondence*, p. 265.

[2] Engels to Bebel, June 20th, 1873; *Selected Correspondence*, p. 347.

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further quotation to substantiate these ironic and carefully qualified remarks?

Pluralism and Parties

In "drawing attention to the deeply democratic nature" of Marxism-Leninism, as Johnstone sums up his article, it is by no means justifiable to pair this with its "pluralistic elements". It would be astonishing if Marx' thought had not contained strong pluralistic features. He came from nineteenth-century Germany, where pluralism was to be found—putting it mildly—in just about every side of life. The impressive thing is how firmly he and Engels set their faces against it, asserted the truth of one political economy, proclaimed one proletarian ideology, fought for one world working-class association and established one workers' party.

It was the same with Lenin. He recognised that "the party spirit is rather strong in Russia"[3] and insisted on full representation of the masses and their right to recall the deputies they had elected. What, however, was his attitude to other parties? "Each man must choose between joining our side or the other side. . . . One can see the same thing everywhere (Western Europe, Germany)—the impossibility of taking an intermediate position. . . . Parties may represent the interests of their class in one degree or another. . . . Our entire experience shows that this is a very serious matter, and we must therefore give prominence to Party primacy and never lose sight of it. . . ."[4]

This, in general, was Lenin's position, as I think Monty would agree. Lenin was concerned with the primacy of the Party. For him, what counted was action by the working people for their interests. He spoke in specific terms when arguing with the British socialist Jack Tanner at the 2nd Congress of the Communist International. "A political party" he said "can comprise only a minority of a class, in the same way as the really class-conscious workers in any capitalist society constitute only a minority of all workers. We are therefore obliged to recognise that it is only this class-conscious minority that can direct and lead the broad masses of the workers".[5]

I assume it was not this sort of formulation Johnstone had in mind when he ended his article by rejecting "any elitist or paternalistic interpretation of Marxism". If he had, Lenin himself supplied the answer later in the same speech. He pointed out that "there exists among the British comrades a certain mistrust of political parties. They can conceive . . . only . . . of parties of parliamentary smart dealers and traitors to the working class. . . . What we want is new and different parties. We want parties that will be in constant and real contact with the masses and will be able to lead those masses". This was the touchstone for Lenin. Not elitism, but mass politics. That has been and must remain the unique quality of Communist Parties.

Role of the Communist Party

No one could accuse Monty of suffering from any "mistrust of political parties". On the contrary, he accepts too readily the part they claim to play in keeping a check on excesses, in keeping alternatives open and in keeping criticism free. He largely overlooks, in my impression, the *uniqueness* of a Marxist party, the factors that make is *not like* other parties and its *new meaning* for the workers. As a result, he seems to me to fail to grasp the dialectical impact of a developing Communist Party on other parties (and on itself). Because it most fully (never entirely but vastly more than the others) expresses the changing forces within society it demonstrates the contradiction between the *real needs* of society and the *inadequate form* of the other parties. Through *its* existence, society demands that *they* change.

Lenin was blunt about this. "The dictatorship of the proletariat is the most determined and revolutionary form of the proletariat's class struggle against the bourgeoisie. This struggle can be successful only when the most revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat has the backing of the overwhelming majority of the proletariat. Hence, preparation (for it) entails . . . old leaders being replaced by Communists in proletarian organisations of absolutely every type".[6]

Strongly class-conscious workers assumed the leadership of Soviet life while Lenin lived and afterwards. It often happens that an unpretentious popular work goes to the root of important questions, so I propose to quote from the latest issue of *Sputnik*, which carries an article on why the Soviet Union has only one political party. "Soviet power never banned democratic parties or denied them political existence" it is emphasised. "The existence of one political party is not a general law of the socialist revolution and socialist construction. . . . On the eve of the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks advanced and pursued the idea of an alliance with the left-wing Socialist Revolutionaries, an expression of the idea of an alliance of the workers and peasants. . . . (Thus) the Bolsheviks offered

[3] Lenin, 'Report on Right of Recall', December 4th, 1917; *Collected Works*, 26, p. 339.

[4] 'Speech to Political Education Workers', November 3rd, 1920; *Collected Works*, 31, pp. 366-7.

[5] "Speech to CI", July 23rd, 1920; *Collected Works*, 31, pp. 235-6.

[6] "Theses on Comintern Fundamental Tasks", July 4th, 1920; *Collected Works*, 31, p. 191.

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to consolidate "on top"—at the level of political parties—the alliance of workers and peasants". Elsewhere the article explains that when the Bolshevik Party put forward the slogan "All Power to the Soviets" it "did not link the transfer of power to the Soviets with the preliminary expulsion of members of other political parties who were calling for class collaboration".

Well and good. Then what happened? "The exposure of the official leaderships of the Mensheviks and SRs led to splits and disintegration in the ranks of these parties. The Bolsheviks then backed those groups which had taken the road of internationalism and supported the power of the Soviets". They prevailed. Why? Simply because "in acting as the vanguard of the working class fighting for socialism the Communist Party considered the interests of all categories of the working population . . . in this sense, objectively a party of all working people". The basic reason for this is clarified in the opening words of the little article (and incidentally I have few qualms about political education in the USSR if this is a sample), which describe the class from which the Party springs as "the only class in history that strives to gain power not in order to perpetuate its rule but in order to eliminate all classes and all rule of society by any class or group. It is this specific mission of the working class that determines the specific mission of its political party".[7]

Parties Under Socialism

To me, this was the great disappointment of Johnstone's article. Nowhere does he analyse the mission of parties or of the classes that determined their mode of activity. Never does he ask what the purpose was, what it was all for. Again, surely these are not the questions Monty dismisses as teleology?

There are indeed some very important things to say about multi-party systems under socialism. The first is that parties correspond broadly to socio-economic classes. The concept of the socio-economic formation as an integrated whole still requires much further thought and study from Marxists, and it is obvious that the social realisation of class interests may lag behind economic fact. People join parties because of how they *see* their interests and "false consciousness" is common. The value of Marxism is that it shows what *underlies* appearances. On this the Marxist theory of the Party of a new type rests. It is significant that Monty presents only a couple of quotations from Marx and Engels to justify his initial insistence on the role of fractions of classes as bases for parties, whereas the literature on the vanguard party in the dictatorship of the proletariat runs into hundreds of volumes. In any case, Marxism deals in concrete cases and precise qualification is one of its hallmarks—but no warrant for sweeping generalisation.

Secondly, however, there is the problem of representation. Here I cannot resist *Sputnik* again:

> "(There is) a class basis for the possibility of the existence of a multi-party system under the dictatorship of the proletariat. It stands to reason that the ruling communist party cannot form government blocs with parties that oppose socialism, whatever names they assume. That would be a betrayal of the cause of socialism."

In the same vein, the interesting section on diverse forms of working-class power in the *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism* includes this passage:

> "Other political parties can exist side by side with the Marxist-Leninist Party during the transition period, provided that they stand for the abolition of monopoly capital rule and support the policy of socialist construction."[8]

Both these statements indicate a narrower view of the opportunities for various parties under socialism than we would readily accept in Britain now. But at least they face the issue. Monty does not. Here, too, while seeming to face a much bigger issue than the comrade he criticises he actually introduces a premise that puts his subsequent argument on false grounds. He criticises Sobolev and one might easily start to believe that Sobolev is a rather blinkered professor who is naive on the subject of parties as we know them. Really what Sobolev wrote about concerned multi-party government under socialism; and the whole issue is one of *governing*. That is why working men and women come into the communist movement, so that the workers shall govern. What does Monty think is going to happen to non-socialist parties under socialism? If they don't change, will they last? If they do change, won't they recognise their community of interest with the working class? As for parties with a working-class base, will it be long before they adopt Marxist programmes? And, above all, in these two cases of the evolved non-proletarian party and the evolving proletarian party, shouldn't they be sharing in the government of their country? What will be outside?

The *British Road to Socialism* guarantees legal rights to all parties.[9] It avoids fruitless speculation about their ultimate future, while implying that this will be decided by open political struggle relying on majority rule.[10] Because it is a general

[7] *Sputnik*, January, 1971; pp. 33-42.

[8] *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism*, original English edition, 1961; p. 661.

[9] p.52.

[10] pp.6, 29, 49, 51.

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document charting an overall line of advance, it is inevitably open to somewhat different interpretations; it can, so to speak, be opened on the left-hand or right-hand arm of the reader's chair. Nothing in it, however, could possibly be interpreted as even hinting at the preservation of non-Marxist parties for the sake of doing so. Yet Monty, in his closing column, seems to feel sorry that the Mensheviks (!) had not been kept going. What would he expect in Britain, I wonder? We are down to five or six parties already. The Labour Party must merge with others to make a unified workers' party, that is clear. As the working class is in the majority, the interests of other classes should be seen more clearly fairly rapidly, given ideological struggle. Perhaps, though, his fractions of classes will help out. This is the logical death of *raising pluralism to the level of a principle.*

The Soviet Experience

To endorse his belief in the necessity of pluralism Monty enrols Lenin in what seems to be the most telling of all his quotations: "In free countries the people are ruled through an open struggle between parties and by free agreement between these parties". Unfortunately this is another of Monty's extracts from the classics that yields a different meaning when inspected in context. Russia actually was ruled in this way, Lenin said—"For about four months after the overthrow of the tsarist regime"! Who was the one comrade dissatisfied from the outset with this state of affairs? Lenin.

Lenin showed that such a situation could not amount to "a truly popular and truly democratic revolution". "The Soviets were elected in an absolutely free way . . . there should have been no other power in the state" but "compromise with the bourgeoisie by the SRs and Mensheviks (was) the main content of the entire course of development". Quickly the "SRs and Mensheviks . . . agreed to everything" and "united with the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie". "This shameful finale was not fortuitous but a consequence of the economic status of the small owners" which "confirmed the old Marxist truth that the position of the petty bourgeoisie is unstable".[11] Once more Lenin displays a totally different attitude to politics from Johnstone. He pierces *the form of political arrangements* to reach the *maturing political process.*

Johnstone's article gives the irresistible impression of greater concern for the formal democracy of, for example, the parties in the Soviets than for what was happening among their mass membership. This reaches a fantastic height in his picture of Lenin deciding on the October Revolution as he "carefully studied . . . election results". In point of fact, Lenin literally wrote in the very letter to the Central Committee that Monty chooses: "We must not be deceived by the election figures; elections prove nothing".[12]

Dialectical Approach Needed

However, it is utterly unnecessary (and would be absolutely wrong) to try to show that Lenin was not extremely concerned with the democratic existence of political parties. Of course he was. He saw the question dialectically, in terms of their constantly changing relationships, both mutually and with the masses. Like other Marxists, he considered it would be favourable for the working class and its allies to exercise state power, in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, through a parliamentary republic with several representative political parties. Communists certainly favour "open struggle and free agreement". Our present programme envisages such a process playing the central part in the long-term advance too: "The Communist Party and the Labour Party, in which the right wing had been defeated, would be the political organisations of the working class. . . . In working together . . . a common approach would increasingly be found . . . through personal conviction" with the aim of "a single united Marxist party".[13]

Pluralism is not singled out as a principle here. Nor is the one-party system. Johnstone is raising

[11] "Lessons of the Revolution", late July, 1917; *Collected Works*, 25, pp. 228-230, 237-238.

[12] "The Bolsheviks Must Assume Power", late September, 1917; *Collected Works*, 26, p. 19.

[13] *British Road To Socialism*, 1968; p. 56.

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a hue and cry without being able to prove either that pluralism offered the slightest help to the Paris Commune or the October Revolution, or that it offers any decisive help for future socialist democracy. He might have been on firmer—if restricted—ground if he had mentioned the working of multi-party systems in people's democracies over the last twenty years. There it is operative in practice. "This bloc policy" they say[14] "is charaterised by the fact that all parties are making a joint effort and jointly bear the responsibility. . . . They do not fight each other but they co-govern the country . . . on the basis of the principle of unanimity. . . . An opposition could only be directed against the common interests. . . . A predominating role is played by the working-class party".

I have no wish to end this short critique of Monty's erudite article in a melodramatic way, but I cannot rid my mind of a picture of him, pushing a Trojan horse into the beleagered Communist camp. I fancy this Trojan horse packed with opponents of basic concepts such as democratic centralism and materialist ideology. Monty's role is obscure in this folly, whether he is the crafty Odysseus or one of the Olympian gods. Nor is mine any plainer, whether a wild Cassandra, a doomed Paris or an Aeneas destined to see more glorious triumphs (for his political line!) after the imminent disaster.

There are, however, two quotations which should serve to warn British Marxists not to fete this horse, if such it is. The first is merely food for thought, the second from Engels. *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism:*

> "Revisionists claim that parliamentarism presupposes a multi-party system and opposition, and that working-class dictatorship completely precludes them. This is their pretext for denying the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat in countries with strong parliamentary traditions."[15]

Engels, to Bebel, December 11th, 1884:

> "In any case our sole adversary on the day of the crisis and on the day after the crisis will be *the whole of the reaction which will group around pure democracy* and this, I think, should not be lost sight of."[16]

[14] *Introducing the GDR*, 1969; p. 55
Poland—Facts and Figures, 1969; p. 24.

[15] p. 661.

[16] *Selected Correspondence*, p. 457.

Why did it happen?

N. C. Brooks

For too long there has been in our Party a great unwillingness to discuss and analyse the aberrations and distortions of Soviet power in the workers' state that occurred in the Soviet Union from the mid-1920's onwards and which were followed by similar events in the East European countries. For many years everything was faithfully accepted, from the Moscow Trials to the branding of Trotsky as a fascist agent. The 20th Congress shattered these previously accepted "facts". But since then there has been hardly any attempt to analyse the historical process that lead to these aberrations; there has only been an admission that "something went wrong somewhere" and that "mistakes were made". But for Marxists this is not good enough. History cannot be explained away as a series of mistakes and left at that; the basic class forces must be analysed, and it is only by this method that a satisfactory conclusion can be reached.

The articles in recent aditions of *Marxism Today* by Maurice Dobb, Jack Kay and Bill Carritt must therefore be welcomed as a step forward. But in my opinion, their analyses are not carried nearly far enough, in two respects. Firstly, in relation to the "cult of the individual", which is a theory often used to account for recent Russian history. Jack Kay says in his discussion article: "It is this change from the mass struggle with collective leadership of the Party as the necessary condition of success, to methods of individual decision that I see as the key to understanding the distortions". But why was collective leadership and mass struggle replaced by individual decision? No attempt is made to explain this. My second criticism is that no attempt is made to explain what is meant by the word bureaucracy, which is so often used in the context of such discussions. Again it is insufficient to explain this as the methods

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and outlook of individuals, and to talk of "excesses" on their part.

Contradictions and Distortions

The distortions that took place in the Soviet Union are social phenomena, and they cannot be explained away in terms of mistakes or personalities. Their roots lie in the conflicts and contradictions between classes both inside and outside the Soviet Union, and it is in terms of these that a concrete explanation can be formulated. Briefly stated, the principal features of such an analysis are the smallness of the Russian proletariat at the time of the Revolution, with it weakened by war and surrounded by the vast sea of peasantry; the defeats of the international proletariat, especially in Germany, and the subsiding of the revolutionary wave that swept through Europe immediately after the First World War; and following from this, the isolation of the Russian Revolution.

Lenin and the other Bolsheviks saw the Russian Revolution as the opening stage of a revolution to extend to the advanced countries of Western Europe, necessary to save the Soviet Union from the internal forces that were threatening to destroy Soviet power. In particular Lenin wrote many articles drawing attention to and attacking the growth of the bureaucratic machine. At the Eleventh Congress of the Bolshevik Party for instance he said:

> "If we take Moscow with its 4,700 Communists, in responsible positions, and if we take the huge bureaucratic machine, that gigantic heap, we must ask: who is directing whom. I doubt very much whether it can be truthfully said that the Communists are directing that heap. To tell the truth, they are not directing, they are being directed.' (*Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 288).

In one of the last of his articles, "Better Fewer, But Better", Lenin said:

> "Thus at the present time we are confronted with the question—shall we be able to hold on with our small and very small peasant production, and in our present state of ruin, until the West-European capitalist countries consummate their development towards socialism" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 499).

In fact, of course, the Russian Revolution did remain isolated, and both before and after Lenin's death his bureaucracy grew, crushing all opposition before it, and perpetrating tremendous crimes (as revealed at the 20th Congress). It is important to realise that this bureaucracy was not just an aggregate of inefficient habits or methods; it became a social phenomenon, it ossified into a definite parasitic growth on the workers' state.

Jack Kay puts forward the argument that the "distortions of socialism" occurred because of the continuation of capitalist ideology. But the question must then be asked, why this capitalist ideology was able to reassert itself after the revolution of 1917. Is this bound to happen after every socialist revolution? If not, then he must explain why not; the argument that "it was because the fight outlined by Lenin was abandoned" again poses the question as one of individuals, not of class forces. And even if this was posing the question correctly, then by now the "distortions of socialism" should be dying away. But in fact this not happening. The events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and after show that there has been no real change since the days of Stalin. Had such a change occurred, then discussions such as these would now be superfluous. Yet such is the state of affairs in the Soviet Union that problems and questions concerning the existence of a bureaucracy are still continually forced to the surface.

Analysis Needed

Our Party has therefore to make an analysis of Russia subsequent to the Revolution. Without this there can be no understanding of what happened. This difficult task must be faced up to; as Marxists we cannot put it aside indefinitely, or even temporarily. Dependent on such an analysis is our whole attitude to the Soviet Union, and our understanding of more recent events in East Europe, particularly relating to Czechoslovakia. The issues of bureaucracy and Stalinism must be raised, discussed and understood. All illusions must be dispersed and all dogmatism cast aside. Until we do this, we shall be unable to distinguish between the fundamental and lasting gains of the Russian Revolution in terms of the expropriation of capitalism and the planned economy on the one hand, and the crimes, the waste and inefficiency perpetrated by the bureaucracy on the other. We must return to the real heritage of the Bolshevik Revolution. We can show the advantages of a planned economy over capitalism; along with the ideas of workers' power and workers' internationalism, our ideas would have a tremendous effect on workers here and internationally.

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